

Dragons Bloodline volume 5

written by hitoneko

Translated by ziru

Conference

They met immediately.

Seeing Carla's white mantle wave in the castle's corridor, Ria called out to her.
"Yo. What's up?"

"Hi. Until Hime-sama's preparations are complete, I'll be reviewing my training."
Although Carla seemed cool with her response, that pretty face had collapsed in
Ria's arms.

Just thinking back to it what enough for Ria's chest to tighten. A wicked lust was
overflowing from a part that wasn't there.

"So then, mind if I tag along?"

"Please, feel free."

With a perfect smile, Carla responded.

Then, those two looked at the sight of knights lined up in a row practicing.
Whenever some knights sought advice, Carla would answer.
Nodding as though in a feverish dream, they would head back to training.
Carla was smiling faintly. Being watched by her, the knights practiced with extra
vigor.

It was a mystery that no one was looking at her with lustful eyes. Maybe they
thought that falling in love with a goddess would be insolence?

Well, if they just focused on training, they would probably get their superior's
attention.

(Though even so, even Carla eats and poops... Probably.)

Despite Ria thinking about such disrespectful things, Carla was standing in a
dignified manner next to her.

A single knight stood in front of Ria.

"A moment, your highness?"

He was standing upright. The man seemed to be a serious person.

"Yeah, what is it?"

"I've heard that your highness uses a katana. In truth, I also use a katana. If it is
alright, please instruct me."

There certainly was a katana on that knight's waist.

"Hou."

That put Ria in a good mood. As the knight hoped, she went to stand in the practice area.

So long as she could wield a katana, she could concentrate. Ria was that kind of a living thing.

She instructed him in general forms. She crossed blades to show him, but he wasn't that skilled.

"Strong."

Carla called out to Ria after she returned.

"When you truly fight, it's easier to understand."

"It's also different when watching from the side."

That was probably true.

Just by looking at Carla, one could feel Ria's body temperature rise if they touched her.

But, she wondered.

Even after sheathing her katana, she still couldn't think of anything but her.

They were that.

Probably, her feelings were that.

The thing known as love.

"Now then, how about us talk now?"

Clapping her hands together, Guinevere began to speak. Without going into any useless preamble, she declared the start of their conference.

The cabinet members that directly participated in the nation's administration, as well as Ria's group, were there. Though they're called her group, that didn't include Gig and Maal since they were representing the ogres and the beastkin. They would get their individual time.

Though it was probably fine to bring Serge, he also didn't go since he would be introduced as a scheming child.

"First off, the purpose of this conference is the concentration of power in the northwest part of the continent to last out the millennium. After that, I don't care."

Ria nodded.

"Exactly, and for that Cordova must be destroyed or made to surrender, as well as reform its government."

"What do you mean by reform it?"

"First of all, reform its laws. That country is too strict with its criminals."

What did Ria mean when she said Cordova's laws were strict? To put it simply, they were rigid to an extreme degree.

Filled with set precedents, there was no room left to take circumstances into account. Still, people were excessively deemed as having committed national treason. Their government gave the people no rights to object either.

With its censorship of certain ideas, it was pretty much a socialist country. Its nature was even worse, like a despotic country.

(Maybe Serge should have come after all?)

Ria thought to herself.

(He's read a lot more than me, he'd probably have a few ideas on it. Let's speak to him directly after this.)

"Also, it's not limited to Cordova, but remove demi-human discrimination. That part might be a little difficult though."

The population of beastkin in this region, although not exact, was probably even larger than the amount of humans.

Though it was strange that it hadn't already happened in this country, the cause might be because a lot of people's livelihoods depended on hunting and gathering. To begin with, even in Ria's previous life, theory had it that large villages had consolidated together in order to have the population necessary for agriculture.

"Demi-human discrimination... Although segregation is a problem, it's not something that's particularly rejected either."

However, there was a clear distinction between demi-humans in the surrounding regions.

Since their ecologies were different, it was natural that coexistence would be difficult as well. That's also excluding foolish examples such as strong people that don't conform with physiology.

"However, with things like problems with food and land rights, conflicts will occur."

The minister of state was nodding.

"That might be something for the future, but right now our problem is the millennium. For the food problems, I think the propagation of agriculture is still necessary. However, both beastkin and ogres are fundamentally love meat..."

This time, it was Maal and Gig's turn to nod.

"Well, the food problem will be dealt with one way or another. I just want the dwarves' metallurgy techniques and magic stones produced from labyrinth. If we have those, to be frank, I have confidence that we wouldn't lose against Cordova."

There seemed to be plans to mass produce the golem that Guinevere was on. Cordova's military might was famous, its heavy infantry's outfits were given magic defenses and its cavalry were mobile and strong. However, when taking into account how its wars developed and the way it ruled afterwards, it wasn't a real threat.

"To win against Cordova, we just need to tear down their logistics and military engineers."

Cordova's largest advantage was that it was a nation specialized in war. It maintained a national highway, it built fortifications, it transported military equipment and provisions, and had a moving army.

Its principles were the threat.

"With that, if we don't come together into a large alliance, I think that we won't be able to overthrow Cordova."

The minister of foreign affairs and the intelligence chief were explaining that even if there were countries that declared Cordova as their absolute enemies, it seemed there were also countries that sought to survive under Cordova.

But both kinds of countries had something in common: they feared Cordova. Although they said 'under Cordova', those countries only did so because they were afraid. They figured that they would want to weaken Cordova's power or destroy it if they could.

"So, the one to become the symbol of this anti-Cordova's buildup of power... is you!"

With a snap, Guinevere pointed towards Ria.

"Me?"

"You~ are~ Casalia's~ Ojou-sama~. Cordova's~ main~ house's~ Ojou-sama~"

Guinevere was twirling her fingers in circles while talking funny.

“If it’s you~ other countries will follow~”

Then, she stopped suddenly.

“Do you have the resolution?”

With that said, Ria was stumped.

To become the symbol of something. She had experienced that in the past.

Most of all, all of the ogres were under Ria’s leadership. Their soldiers would die if it were for Ria.

If it were them, they wouldn’t object to running into a battlefield. But then she would be burdening them with something from a foreign country, wasn’t that arrogant?

“From your father in Casalia, you will get the title of archduke and establish a grand duchy. Then you will oppose Cordova. So?”

(I see, so that’s Guinevere’s plan huh?)

“I can’t manage a country...”

“Leave it to me, I’ll be the regent. Realistically, Manesh dukedom would become the grand duchy.”

However, the country called Manesh would likely disappear.

“And I would like you to make my son your adopted son. That would preserve Manesh’s legitimacy.”

(Ah, so that’s it.)

“And though I wanted you to choose a king from one of our aristocrats... I’ll ask you frankly. Are you truly homosexual?”

Hearing the blunt question, the ministers’ faces tensed up as expected.

Even so, Ria didn’t think the queen was being audacious, and she wouldn’t start lying here.

With an exaggerated sigh, Ria shrugged her shoulders and answered.

“It’s true. From the moment I was born until now, I’ve never harbored feelings towards a man.”

Towards Ria’s declaration, the cabinet members faces were aghast.

People would usually conceal something like that. Well, although male homosexuality was famous among aristocracy, they didn’t think she would answer so resolutely.

“It’s no good even if it’s a handsome youth that looks like a beautiful girl?”

"Impossible. There were many handsome youths in Casalia's court as well, but even so I only thought the women were good."

Toward's her hardcore declaration of homosexuality, the cabinet members were drawing away.

Carla was thinking over Ria's interests, but she simply stood behind the queen with a face that said nothing.

"Well, I don't mind living in the same residence for political reasons, but don't expect anything for the night. For that, give me a bride."

Many of the courtier's faces reddened towards her frank manner of speech. Since this country's governing body's average age was relatively young, there seemed to be people who couldn't overlook it.

"A bride huh... that should be possible."

The queen also said something unreasonable.

"Someone that's a high ranking aristocrats' daughter, still unmarried, and beautiful of course..."

She looked behind her.

"Carla, will you do it?"

At that moment, the assembly hall blew up.

"Definitely not, definitely not!"

"Carla-dono is the only one that can't!"

"Carla-sama is everyone's!"

"Better yet, please marry her majesty!"

(You're pretty popular, Carla-sama. That's probably understandable for a country's savior though. Unexpectedly, even the queen isn't as popular?)

At any rate, Carla still wasn't married even now because of them sabotaging each others' attempts. As for Ria, she couldn't help but saying GJ though.

"Right! A man like her, to Carla-sama..."

"... Man?"

"She isn't... a man right?"

"..."

(Why'd you all suddenly get quiet there? Oi.)

"... Isn't it fine?"

"Yeah, it'd be different if she were a man."

"This could even be a reward!"

“There it is!”

(Oi oi, their speech suddenly turned towards something incredible.)

“So, we won’t go against Hime-sama’s proposal, but...”

Everyone’s gazes were collected on Carla.

She wasn’t the usual saint, but neither was she blushing. She spoke with a faint smile.

“As your highness desires.”

It was a political and diplomatic stage.

In order to utilize Casalia’s influence to the maximum, they would immediately send messengers.

Although a person at the level of a cabinet member would naturally become an ambassador, Carlos would be travelling with them. The purpose was to tell a detailed story to Ria’s royal father of what happened after going out to travel.

Lulu would also be going. She would be explaining the various circumstances to Agatha.

Although it was arranged that he would be going together with them as a representative from the ogres, Gig was exempted from this. The main problem was that he just didn’t understand political conversations. They would pick up someone from the ogre area on the way.

Moreover, they would also similarly pick up and adult beastkin on the way.

Although it would be best if Ria herself went, she had to do things like getting acquainted with the domestic aristocracy and negotiate with foreign ambassadors. She had a ton of work to do.

“Take care of yourself. Carlos, I’ll kill you if you do something strange to Lulu.”

“I swear on my pride as a knight.”

Carlos declared that while trembling slightly.

And so, the two left Manesh.

“Feeling lonely?”

Shizuna called out from behind Ria. Thinking about it, those two had always been with her the whole time she’d been travelling.

Ria turned around, smiling faintly.

“Lonely huh... will you comfort me?”

Being hugged as though she were gently being wrapped up, Shizuna's face reddened.

Though Ria and her comrades moved into the residence that Carla owned, there weren't many chances to meet with her.

Carla, who held the role of secretary as the commander of the queen's bodyguard, was busy. Living in the inner palace everyday, Ria herself also had many domestic things to take care of.

The periods where Serge was away also increased. He was contributing towards the development of the queen's magic weaponry. There were also a lot of cases where he received magic instruction from Guinevere herself.

Irina was also distant from Ria, learning the fundamentals of the sword from the knights. And she wouldn't part from Maal.

Consequently, Ria was always with Shizuna and Gig, but...

As for Ria and Shizuna, they shared a bedroom.

Although Shizuna's title was tentatively Ria's guard, she was actually her mistress.

She participated in the knights' training, and although there were few scornful aimed towards her since she displayed her skill, she didn't think that being thought of as someone's lover was shameful.

Shizuna was innocent after all.

Meeting Ria, although she knew what making love to someone was, she didn't really feel like a homosexual.

Deliberately keeping her in mind, Ria didn't pursue her every night.

When she had little time, she would kiss her cheek, whisper sweet words into her ear, and sleep.

The calm days continued.

Since Carla and Ria didn't share beds, Shizuna was relieved. Though Carla was her legal wife, it couldn't be helped since it was a problem of social status.

When she slept while actually being held in Ria's arms, even though she would remember her inferiority complex towards Carla's beauty, Shizuna would console herself.

When Carla was settled into the position as Ria's wife, Ria spoke to her.

"Since we aren't a true couple, if you can find a man you really like, it's fine to leave me."

“That won’t happen.”

Carla made that assertion with her usual calm smile.

On the evening of such a day.

Ria, who had quietly slipped out of the castle, was wandering around the town near the castle.

That wasn’t her goal. Her goal was to get out of the castle.

A bat flew through the dark night.

Stopping on a small street, there was a maiden with flaxen hair wearing a hood.

“It’s not that it’s hard for me to enter the castle or anything. Its barrier is weak.”

After complaining like that, Asuka started talking.”

“Cordova is stirring.”

The upheaval had began.

Mobilization

That Manesh's ally had been groundlessly invaded by Cordova was immediately brought to the royal palace via various routes.

And when the rescue request comes, the preparations for the first corps' reinforcements would be completed. For things like this, the young country moved quickly.

"Two army corps of twenty-four thousand and a supply convoy have moved."

What the intelligence chief said corresponded to Asuka's news.

Perhaps, the Cordova army would invade the country. The allied forces could mobilize ten thousand troops at most.

Manesh had also prepared to mobilize an army of around that size. Then, a messenger departed towards ogre village.

Alone, an ogre had the same war potential as ten trained soldiers. If even one hundred of them came, they would very likely gain a considerable increase to their forces.

There was a child sitting in the conference where people were discussing that seemed out of place.

It was Serge. As a future staff officer candidate, Guinevere had him sit in.

That Serge timidly raised his hand.

"Umm~... it's a simple question, but..."

Urged on, Serge continued.

"Is using Carla-sama's magic to annihilate them no good? Can't it do it?"

Right then, the generals stopped moving.

It could do it. However, it mustn't be done.

They mustn't let Carla do it.

"Due to political reasons, that is impossible. Even so, if it truly comes down to it, it isn't a time to cast away our last resort."

(Political reasons? I don't understand the details, but it's probably bad to use it in a war. I somehow get it.)

"Carla is our last resort. Since it hasn't been cast away, it has value. For if something like a group of assassins attacked in the one in a thousand chance."

(Well, we wouldn't die even with that though.)

Serge thought that, but didn't say it.

Even if she was very talented, even Ria might find being hunted by assassins year-round being unpleasant.

"More importantly, I want you to take charge of logistical operations."

Guinevere appointed Serge. This was likely because she knew about Serge being able to use space-time magic.

"How many days' worth of provisions and horse fodder would you be able to move for ten thousand infantry?"

"What would the size and weight for thirty days' worth be?"

A secretary calculated it on a piece of paper. It was an amount that Serge would be able to handle with his ability.

"In that case, I could transport around one year's worth with some extra."

The attending generals stared in shock. After Guinevere, who also stared momentarily, recovered, she let out a joyful laugh.

Serge's ability to transport things. This would become the key to their war. She understood that.

"Spreading information about this child's magic is strictly prohibited. You have a duty of confidentiality."

Even if he didn't directly enter the battlefield, his ability was immense. Everyone understood this.

Just, the person himself was a little late in understanding it.

"Serge will be defended by Irina and Maal. With those two, there's no problem so long as their opponent isn't a dragon."

Ria also comprehended just how great Serge's ability was.

As the nominal supreme commander, Ria would appear directly.

There was a political goal for this. First of all, for Cordova, this would be a threat that said that they would be opposing Casalia. And for their allies, this would be the announcement of the being known as Ria.

The one who would take practical command of their forces would be the generals, lead by Carla.

The same as with almost the entire continent, one hundred people made one platoon. Ten platoons made one battalion. And ten battalions made an army corp.

With the corps commander leading the army corps, the supply corps would be attached to the army corps. The general would lead more than two army corps. But this time, three generals—Carla included—were assigned to Ria. Since the tentative command order was put in place, that wasn't a problem either.

"But really, an army's march is slow..."

Ria muttered as she swayed on Matsukaze's back.

"Since we don't need to match the speed that cargo would move at, this is considerably fast."

Next to Ria, Carla was also riding a horse as they proceeded forward. Her horse was a good match for her, dapple-grey.

The army was marching forward on a one-week journey that would have taken three days had they gone their fastest.

In order to wait for the ogre and beastkin reinforcements, they weren't going at their fastest speed.

Being able to march faster than the enemies' expectations could allow them to choose the battlefield in a war.

Cordova's army held absolute confidence in itself on the battlefield.

Of course although this also included castle sieges and defensive battles, they could easily defeat enemies that doubled their numbers in a battle.

"Still, we can win with you here."

Before they departed to the front, Guinevere said that.

Anyhow, Ria had the Divine Protection of the War God Gift. From the position of taking command of a battle, it would demonstrate its absolute potency.

Looking over the battle formation plans, Serge and the others said that they didn't have any more to say about it.

"Isn't it overwhelming? Mine army."

Ria immediately slammed her fists down.

Manesh's army had set up camp on a slightly elevated hill.

Merging with their allies that had retreated towards here, they had twenty thousand troops.

Ria was making a long spear inside the command tent. It was just so that Carla and Serge could see it.

While creating the spear with her hands, Ria looked over the topographic map spread out in front of her.

“The cavalry will be a bit of a pain...”

“Have you lead an army before?”

Carla asked the question out of curiosity, so Ria told her about when she battled alongside the village.

“That’s absurd... or not. Certainly, with those conditions, the only way to win was to make use of their individual bravery.”

If Carla was there, she could have annihilated the enemy’s backbone with offensive magic from a distance.

Although that couldn’t apply to this situation, there was one thing in common.

With their army using this high ground, the enemy will attempt to encircle them.

She’d heard that although Cordova’s cavalrymen leveraged their mobility, their physical capability wasn’t that much.

It was essential that they avoided being encircled so that they wouldn’t be attacked from every direction.

On the afternoon of that day, a force of three hundred beastkin joined them.

Ria believed that still wasn’t everything. There wasn’t very many.

Then in the evening, the ogre army arrived and merged with them. They numbered two thousand.

Not two hundred. Two thousand.

For their destructive power, it exceeded even that of cavalrymen. Two thousand elite ogre troops.

Moreover, their leader was the Ogre King.

“Such an interesting thing, I can’t just leave it to the young ones.”

Baring his fangs, he laughed.

That night, officers gathered in the tent.

The beastkins’ forces would examine it in the daytime. They were currently entrusted with going out on reconnaissance.

“Since a strategy that goes too far into the details is bound to fail, I’ll give a rough explanation.”

So, Ria explained things regarding intended enemy movements and behavior, as well as important terrain.

“Disregarding the fine details, does anyone have any questions so far?”

With that, an old general began to speak.

“I think the strategy is adequate, but be that as it may, your highness, did you study military tactics in your native country?”

“No, at most I only have knowledge concerning wars from secondhand sources.”

That is, she often saw programs on public broadcasting from her previous life.

Although she had read about Sun Tzu, that was closer to political theory.

Even so, she found it to be somewhat relevant now.

The strategy meeting finished without any interruptions. The faces of the officers who returned from the tent were filled with a sense of victory.

They couldn’t win. That’s what Ria had thought.

The general that commanded the whole army as well as the staff officers thought that they couldn’t win. Carelessness and pride leads to imprudence. However, for people in the position of directly commanding soldiers, it was necessary to have faith that they would definitely win.

“Your highness, you...”

Remaining behind in the tent, Carla spoke spontaneously.

“Who in the world are you?”

“You didn’t hear about it from Guinevere?”

Ria and Guinevere were already at the point of calling each other by name.

Guinevere’s Dragon Eyes were sure to be able to see all of Ria’s Gifts.

“Hime-sama doesn’t speak much about what she sees with Dragon Eyes.”

(I see. If she were to just talk about the information she obtained, other people would find her eerie. Apart from childhood, has she just been using the information herself now?)

Ria thought to herself.

(What a scheming woman. In a good way, of course.)

“Right, it’s probably fine to tell Carla...”

About her Gift, and the conversation with Valis. And the story of her previous life.

(She’d probably never betray me. Well, even if she does, it’d be myself at fault.)

“When this ends, maybe I’ll tell you. It’ll take a while to explain. And...”

While laughing with a bit of embarrassment, Ria spoke.

“Won’t... won’t you call me by name? That’s... I-like a c-couple... is it no good?”

“No, I understand. Riana-sama.”

(No, that's not it.)

"Ria. Don't use '-sama'."

"But that's.. doesn't it set a bad example?"

(Fumu. That's probably true too.)

If women flirted with each other on the battlefield... well, that wouldn't happen.

Carla wouldn't do something like that. The problem was just Ria.

"Other than on the battlefield, call me—... And when we're alone on the battlefield, call me Ria."

"I understand, Ria."

(Ooh.)

(That. So good.)

Ria rapidly drew near Carla, drawing her lips to her ears. Naturally, Carla's lips also neared Ria's ears.

"Ria? What's wrong?"

(Fuoooooh.)

Ria desperately attempted to stay standing as her waist instinctively tried to give out.

But just in time, she gripped Carla's shoulders with both of her hands. As though she was presenting herself for a kiss.

However, her reason somehow regained itself and she separated herself from her.

"Tomorrow will be the decisive battle. Let's rest early."

Leaving Carla behind in a stupor, Ria departed from the tent.

But in the end, the fight didn't happen.

Cordova's army arrived on the plains in the morning and began to set up camp, but they just lined up and hadn't attacked yet.

"Well, Cordova will do it."

Ria said that lightly.

Cordova's army had few in it that were able to immediately enter battle after nearing the enemy. First they would look to scout out the state of affairs, build a strong camp, and examine their strategy. It was their combat procedure done by

the manual.

However, that didn't mean that Manesh and its allies' combined forces didn't see this. Taking a sufficient distance, they rained arrows down on their enemies while they worked, but since the soldiers in charge of their defense defended them by holding their shields up, it was ineffectual.

Therefore, Ria decided to strengthen their encampment.

"Holes...?"

"Right, they don't need to be that deep. The holes would remove the horses' mobility, so dig a ton of them around here on the map."

Ria issued the instructions while showing the map.

The combined army's soldiers weren't reserve soldiers. They were comprised of volunteers and mercenaries. She was using them as military engineers.

"But with their cavalry's mobility wouldn't they just detour around?"

"Of course. In short, it's good as long as they can't move together with the infantry that act as the enemy's main war potential."

Along with that, by momentarily weakening the cavalry's charge, they could take advantage of them there.

For keeping morale up, there was one challenge.

Even though there was an enemy before them, they couldn't attack their encampment. Performing engineering tasks helped with that.

Ogres, which were natural-born soldiers, had many hot-blooded people that seemed like they would rush out and attack at any moment. Stopping that from happening was Ria's job.

Anyhow, she stopped them by sheer strength. She ended their useless questions. When that repeated several times, the ogres that didn't know about Ria's strength obediently fell into line.

General soldiers turned to Carla for solace. With this number of people, there were people whose physical conditions that would worsen even if they did nothing, so Carla would cure them.

The saint knight has become the saint of holy woman of the battlefield. Ria, whose strength ended useless questions, rivaled that as her charisma transmitted through the soldiers.

"All things considered, their troops are well regulated."

Ria felt admiration as she stared into the distance, looking over the enemy

forces' movements.

Their sentries didn't look away. Their duties were being perfectly carried out.

"This isn't the time to praise the enemy."

Although Carla seemed calm on the outside, this was her first time in a war. In truth she was thinking about a variety of things.

"What, you think we should move?"

"No, the side that has to go on a long expedition is at a disadvantage if it turns into a war of attrition, but I wonder why they don't attack."

"Right. Although their supply lines definitely stretch on... maybe it should be expected considering Cordova's reputation for its supply train?"

Although the two were speaking relatively peacefully, thinking about it from the enemy's point of view, Ria realized it.

"No, that's their goal. They don't know that we have Serge."

Right, if they didn't know about the megalithic amount of goods Serge held, when they scouted out their supplies, they thought it was better to turn it into a war of attrition.

"That's annoying. It's turned into a quiet war..."

Ria's ideal development would be to finish the battle in one go.

Even politically, magnificently surpassing one's enemy gave a huge propaganda impact. Of course, just winning against their opponent, Cordova, that so far hadn't lost a battle, would be amazing.

"For the time being, let's increase the smoke from cooking rice. We'll not show them that we still have a lot to go."

Then, the tenth day passed.

In the middle of the night, the skies to the north were dyed in red.

The beastkin tribe's forces were immediately sent out to scout what happened.

The report came back the next morning. The enemy's supply base seemed to have exploded in flames in two places.

"What army did it?"

Although the officers inclined their heads in thought, Ria had an idea about it.

Attacking in the middle of the night, overcoming their defenses and burning their supplies, there weren't many with those skills.

The vampires and dark elf.

They were hostile towards Cordova, and moreover if those two didn't feel the

need to go easy, they could probably destroy an entire base with just their fighting power alone.

“Don’t idle now. Their supply base has been destroyed, the enemy will come out.”

The officers ran toward their units in a hurry.

Seeing that, Ria laughed brutally.

“Finally. It’s finally time to start this fun war.”

Battle

What was a battle? It wasn't something that started when orders were given. Even though soldiers assemble into ranks after leaving their camp, it takes a considerable amount of time.

"Hold position and not engage, yeah?"

A general verified it. If they held back in their reinforced position, it would help give them quite the advantage as the battle progressed. It would also decrease the amount of casualties they suffer.

However, that wasn't its fundamental reason.

"According to the plan, we will settle this with a battle."

No one rebutted Ria's commands as the generals scattered to command their respective units.

Ria wore a military uniform, preparing to give a speech. For battles like this, the supreme commander would always give encouragement to their troops. Even Cordova's generals were giving speeches to their soldiers. Holding back the impulse of wanting to launch fire magic into their groups was hard.

"Soldiers, what has happened to the nations that received Cordova's aggression as they invaded thus far? I think you all know."

By using amplification magic, her voice would reach all of her troops, but since Ria purposely stood at the forefront, she was taking into consideration the officers and troops of their allies' forces.

"Defeated soldiers, forced and abused into slavery, the mines, or the farms. Most lose their lives before even three months pass!"

Despite whether or not this was true, there definitely were reports of it. She thoroughly fanned the flames of their horror.

"The nations ruled by them suffer heavy taxation and labor, unable to escape with the army's eyes on them."

Again and again, she stressed it.

"Why have we tolerated Cordova's barbaric acts of brutality thus far? It isn't because their nation is mighty."

She slightly changed the subject of her speech.

"The reason? We weren't able to unite as one. Cordova aims to attack weak nations."

This was true as well. Isolating nations through diplomacy, then invading. This was one of Cordova's underhanded practices.

"However! This time, things are different. To end Cordova's aggression and tyranny, Manesh has stood up with the help of beastkin and ogre soldiers."

Right, they were different from the previous nations that were defeated.

"Ogre soldiers, each superior to ten humans. We have three thousand!"

(Padding the numbers a little should be fine. It'll be alright if we win.)

"Then, there is the latest armor and weapons you all have. Go and welcome our enemies with them!"

Their equipment was made by going to considerable lengths. It would be wasted if it wasn't put to good use.

"In addition, we have the Dragonslayer Saint, Carla Raparb Uslan."

Having defeated a dragon that had even destroyed a country, she was a hero for this world. With Ria's words, Carla also made an appearance. Her fame, speaking frankly, was even greater than Ria's. And now, she was their ally.

"We will win this. Then, we will be freed from the horror that is Cordova."

(Ah, I forgot to talk about Casalia's backing. I can't really restart, though.)

"For all of our hometowns and our families' futures! Victory!"

She drew her katana and held it towards the heavens. In addition, Carla also joined, drawing her sword and repeating—

"Victory!"

Ria explained it to some of the soldiers with loud voices beforehand. To join in the chorus. It soon spread, shared by all soldiers.

Victory! Victory! Victory!

Their morale had risen.

(Now then, let's start this war.)

When Ria's group returned to their command tent, the allied forces located at the front started to advance.

Cordova's infantry also advanced in response, both sides entering arrow range.

Since both sides' soldiers held shields, it didn't have much of an effect. However, those who were unlucky were still shot through the gaps between their shields.

Ria sighed in her heart.

She once again realized that she loved war.

Not only her enemies' deaths, but even her allies' deaths, she received it all with pleasure. She loved fighting that staked one's life for it.

Ria wasn't able to keep herself from smiling wryly in her heart that such a feeling was likely sinful for a human to feel.

The infantry continued their advance, their spears finally in contact. Their spears' lengths were longer. Ria made the spears with that purpose in mind. Despite them being mass produced products, it was painful to arrange that number.

Although it seemed they were pressured by the first clash, Cordova's army gradually pushed back. Their individual skills were probably different. Cordova's severe military training was famous.

Their cavalry attempted to encircle them from both sides.

Ria's side only had about half of the amount of cavalry as the enemy. Therefore, Ria arranged for the cavalry to all be on the right flank.

The clash between the two cavalry groups were approximately equal. Better yet, if they managed to lure them into the arranged traps, they would even be at an advantage.

Though the left flank was comprised by Manesh infantry, by making use of their long spears and traps, they managed to somehow force the cavalry into detouring.

As for the troops they had in reserve, five thousand Manesh soldiers and two thousand ogres in all.

Since Cordova split its infantry into three groups, they calculated that it had kept around two-thirds, a total of twenty thousand infantry, as a reserve.

People near Ria stopped in a panic as Ria rode Matsukaze. Among those were Carla and Serge.

"Ria, you're being rash!"

Ria thought that this was the first time she'd heard Carla's voice like that.

"What should I do with the reports?"

Meanwhile, Serge wasn't particularly worried. This wasn't the first time he'd seen Ria thrust into Cordova's soldiers.

"Keep sending them to me. I'll give you instructions each time."

Ria spearheaded a sortie into the flustered officers.

One against a thousand.

A mighty warrior.

Ria, who was accompanied by Shizuna and Rudolph, advanced with her bodyguards as she cut between her allies, crashing into the enemy's front.

With each swing of her cross spear, a person's life ended.

"Her highness came! Stop slacking and show her what you can do!"

The commanders loudly scolded their soldiers. The soldiers that fought to their limits broke through them.

She heard similar voices rise up from the ogres that were at the two flanks. Hearing that Ria was fighting together with them, their fighting spirit couldn't possibly rise any higher.

If Ria died or was captured here, it could turn into a situation of a complete reversal by Cordova.

However, Ria decided on showing herself only after reasoning that the enemy didn't have enough reserve strength to do something like that.

In fact, Cordova's army had collapsed.

Cordovan soldiers went through rigid and severe training so that they wouldn't retreat without orders to do so. Those same soldiers were finally retreating.

Their front collapsed and the war of invasion had begun.

Ordered by the Demon King, a man came to this ground.

His name was Ordo.

Proud of his outstanding capabilities as the Demon King's subordinate, he was famous while at the same time having many problem behaviors.

Why would the Demon King eternally hold such a man in high esteem? Honestly, Rei found it a problem and would only cooperate with him if ordered to.

"All things considered, she's a beauty..."

Ordo's eyesight was on another level from a human's, he was even able to see into Manesh's encampment.

"Especially her, that fine woman with silvery hair. I want to shove her down and violate her."

This man spoke his desires freely and calmly in front of the woman. This was even unpleasant for Rei, who had great self-control.

“She’s the dragonslayer. Besides, even his majesty said to not lower the human’s war potential.”

“I know. I won’t act against his majesty’s orders.”

(Even so...)

Ordo thought.

(A human that could be defeated with just me, how could they help his majesty?)

Besides, if he had to kill, even if he would get some amusement from it, he would devote himself entirely to the battlefield.

He had time. For a while, he would be maneuvering behind the scenes in this northwest part of the continent.

Unlike dark elves that stood out and vampires that practically couldn’t move in the daytime at all, he could easily slip in and go among humans.

He would never go against the Demon King. However, that was just one aspect of it.

Imagining himself pressing down on that silver-haired saint, Ordo’s face distorted into a barbarous smile.

The Queen's Coronation

A battle of pursuit began against the Cordovan army, which had ran away. For this, their own cavalry didn't have enough war potential, preventing them from achieving maximal military gains.

The enemy's cavalry had lost practically all of their war potential. Even so, there were still a few more captured by the beastkin ambushing them from behind. For their infantry's war potential, their numbers dwindled steadily through the pursuit. Their final casualty count numbered around five thousand people. The number of captives was around the same amount.

As for Cordova's remaining military force, they abandoned the areas they invaded and returned to Cordovan territory. With the pursuit stopped at the nation's border, the allied forces started work on preparing a simple stronghold.

On the grounds where the battles occurred, Serge learned why Carla couldn't be counted as part of their war potential.

Regardless of friend or foe, she would heal the wounded with her magic. Because she used her magical power for that, she didn't use her magic for combat.

There were no deaths among the ally side's officers. To be precise, Carla resurrected them even if they died. Of course, an enormous amount of magical power was necessary for that. She wouldn't be able to do it for every soldier.

"There really is a revival magic huh..."

Although Serge felt admiration, even he was busily walking around and distributing supplies.

In the forefront, Manesh's reinforcements that had finally arrived at this late hour were dispatching supplies.

Ria and Carla were standing before wounded enemies and prisoners, giving a speech.

"Gentlemen, there are few paths you can take."

It was Ria that raised her voice. Towards Carla, who was standing beside her as though to snuggle, even the enemy soldiers assumed a praying position as if she were a goddess. She had likely saved many of them from the brink of death.

"First, you can continue on and choose the path that leads to death, but I don't recommend it."

Ria shrugged her shoulders as though she were jesting. The enemy soldiers laughed only in their expressions.

"There is also a path that will see you liberated and returned home. Perhaps most people will choose this one. However, weapons will not be permitted. Minimal rations will be provided."

At this, many people looked surprised. Prisoners of war were usually restrained for use in prisoner exchange, with the majority sold as slaves. And yet, she said they would be given rations.

Because the battle finished quietly without prolonging, the allied forces had food to spare. Using this, Ria proposed liberating the captives.

Although there were naturally many dissenting opinions on this, in the end, this was added as one of the choices. By daring to liberate their captives, this was intentional advertising towards Cordova's interior.

"There is a third way, but you will become a slave to our country for three years, pursuing land reclamation for development. You will be freed after three years pass. Assuming you can reclaim a plot of land, you can do as you want with it, even sell it. You are even free to return to Cordova."

This was an abnormal proposal. If they were enslaved as was normally done, they wouldn't have a choice in the matter. She would even purposely limit the amount of years, giving them the land when their time was up.

Wasn't this practically immigration? Or maybe this was part of a population growth policy?

"There are some among you all that are the second or third sons of a farming family, or there may be people originating from low income groups from the city as well. If you do not aspire to return to your hometown, I recommend taking this path."

Since Cordova's army definitely had anti-refugee measures in place, this was considerably attractive. Particularly, unlike Cordova, there was a large chance that they wouldn't be roped into the war.

"And then there is the last path, but people will be chosen for this."

Ria's gaze swept over the soldiers. With her forceful discernment, only a few soldiers didn't flinch.

"I will recruit soldiers to be my, Ryuken Riana's, bodyguards. For any daredevils among you, I want you to apply."

Even if they weren't daredevils, if they called themselves a man, they would be forced to consider it.

Particularly the men who took pride in their strength. Their eyes held a certain gleam. If they hadn't seen Ria's crazy fighting, this would have been looked like a good offer.

"As being my bodyguard will be truly dangerous, I only request for genuine soldiers. That is all."

Ria abruptly turned and left.

Concerning the results, more than half of the soldiers returned to Cordova. Manesh soldiers escorted them to the border, freeing them there. They hoped that they would propagate the allied force's political stance throughout Cordova.

Additionally, close to half chose to become slaves. They were sent to clear land in Manesh. Since the area opened for development had brought in golems as an experiment, it wasn't that harsh of an environment either.

And for those that went with being Ria's bodyguards, around one hundred soldiers remained. It went without saying that Ria beat down each and every one of the people that claimed to be daredevils, smashing many noses in.

As for Manesh finishing the postwar processing and returning, it had been one month since their departure.

Their victory against Cordova in combat provided a huge influence, with most of the surrounding countries joining the alliance and sending delegates. Cordova's notoriety had reached an extreme.

However, many of the ambassadors came to say similar things.

"By the way, we have heard that your highness still does not have a consort. If you wish, our country has a prince, and he is perfectly of age to be a groom..."

Towards offers like that, Ria answered politely.

"It is unfortunate, but I have no interest in men. I might have accepted a wife though..."

"... Huh?"

Currently, there were no ambassadors capable of proposing to present a princess.

Although things like that were usually discussed in private and not in front of ambassadors, she had made certain that both Carla and Shizuna attended.

“Besides, I already have a bride.”

Saying that, she demonstrated towards Carla.

“And a concubine.”

Saying that, she demonstrated towards Shizuna.

“Well, I already have enough women for a while. With a beautiful wife and adorable concubine, I don’t have the love to spare.”

Carla’s composed expression didn’t falter, but Shizuna looked down with a red face.

Carla was attending in different clothes than her usual knight outfit, she was wearing a dress like a noble’s daughter.

“B-but then, how will you produce an heir?”

A bewildered ambassador asked.

Even if worrying about a successor was natural for nobles, that story had already been settled.

“It is planned for Manesh’s prince to become my adopted son. It will be formally announced when I ascend to the rank of archduchess.”

Since it was originally Manesh’s territory, she would adopt the prince as her son and heir. It was a reasonable story.

As expected, since there wouldn’t a successor born, no countries had women that took wives. If there were, it’d be a scandal.

“At any rate, I am too busy. I don’t even have the time to flirt with my bride.”

Ria was grumbling, but the people around her were busy as well. Not to mention Carla, Shizuna was also training with the men that had newly become Ria’s bodyguards.

Shizuna’s request from Valis was the acquisition of a new Skill.

It was something that Ria and Carla already had from their Gifts, but it was something that ordinary humans couldn’t obtain. It was [Limit Break].

It was a skill said to be able to allow a human to surpass their limits. While fighting against others, she strove to master this skill.

As she continued exhausting herself trying to master it, Ria wasn’t able to have

fun tormenting her at night.

“Even though we’re finally back from the battlefield, it’s nothing but business...”

“Give it up. Such is the way of a statesman.”

Seeing Ria desperately grapple with official documents, Guinevere was the one to laugh in response. Although, she also had a mountain of official papers next to her.

Days like that passed by, and when Ria finally learned to assign others to do her business work, something that she was looking forward to finally arrived. The messenger from Caslia had arrived.

First was the advance force, thirty knights leading three thousand infantry. The face leading them all was one she recognized.

“Reyas!”

From within the group of knights that lined up before the palace’s plaza, a knight vice-captain appeared.

Taking a knee right there, he made a deep bow to Ria.

“Your highness hasn’t changed at all...”

“No, I’ve changed.”

Her appearance had changed considerably. Above all, her eyes were a different color now.

“You probably have a lot to say too. For now, please come in. Everyone else, be at ease.”

Saying so, Ria had Reyas stand.

The elevation of his gaze was different. Since Reyas hadn’t changed, it was herself that had grown.

“Understood. Then, just one more person with me.”

Reyas raised a hand, calling out a knight’s name.

“Fiona, come!”

As for who came out of the group, it was a knight with a small build. When they took off their helmet and revealed their long black hair, it was no wonder.

A girl. Around the same age as Ria. She was tall for a woman, although it wasn’t as much as Ria. Though it’d be fine to call her a beautiful girl at first, her eyes were dreadful. She seemed to be staring at Ria.

(Wait, is she really staring at me?)

She couldn't recall the child, but wondered if she had maybe done something bad to her indirectly.

(... I have no idea.)

Since her level was also considerably high, it would've been unpleasant for her to have a grudge.

"I am Fiona Uran Crystera. This life, I stake on serving your highness."

(No no, rather than saying you'll stake your life, isn't your gaze saying you'll stake it on killing me?)

Reyas had the woman that took a knee and declared such stand. The Crystera family should have an earl. That is to say, this young woman's becoming a knight was something serious to get her family's understanding for.

"She will serve at your highness' side, please accept her as your liaison with the knights. As her age is also close to your highness', please use her without reservation."

"Please treat me well."

(Was there some fighting spirit in that? I felt some blood lust in that greetings.)

In truth, she really was a capable secretary.

"Fio, take these papers."

"These?"

In the blink of an eye, she had already been given a pet name. Their ability to work together was even greater than Lulu's.

She was probably a person that could properly separate work life and personal life. Although she would often meet with Guinevere as a liaison, her evaluation of her was high as well.

If you excluded Shizuna, who shared bedrooms with Ria, Fio, who actually accompanied her for paperwork and troop reviews, she was the person she was in contact with the most.

But even so, Ria was anxious about those eyes that contained vigor as they stared at her.

"I wonder what Carla's doing today."

"Her Royal Highness Carla—"

With a freezing tone, Fio spoke. Moreover, she added the ‘royal highness’.

“—Is expected to visit an orphanage today.”

(Ah, come to think of it, there was that huh. She was under the care of an orphanage as a child.)

“By the way, Shizuna-sama is expected to go to review Manesh’s third army.”

Although it felt off for Shizuna to have a ‘-sama’ attached, she was now written down in the family tree as the official second princess. It was decided that she couldn’t continue on calling her her consort forever, but the term ‘queen’s wife’ sounded odd.

But she understood with Fio’s attitude.

(She probably hates homosexuality. Well, it can’t be helped. That’s the general value system.)

“Fio, you know...”

So Ria decided to discuss it with her amicably.

“I understand that it’s hard for you to approve of homosexuality. If you don’t like it, it’s fine if you want to get a different job.”

To contrast that, Fio responded intensely.

“That’s not it!”

Her voice was a strong denial.

“I... yearn for Hime-sama!”

A confession of strong favor.

“F-for me?”

From her vigor, Ria had been instinctively pressed back. This was the first time she had received such pure goodwill from a woman.

“But, it always feels like Fio is glaring at me...”

(What was that then?)

Fio’s eyes swam about. However, she once again stared at Ria mightily.

“I was stupid.”

Then, Fio’s confession began.

When she was in Casalia’s court, she was attracted by Ria’s freedom.

That she liked women, she longed for that figure that could declare such a thing composed, something that normally wouldn’t be declared at all.

She wanted to be even a little closer to her. Thinking that, she became a knight.

Despite that, when Ria left to travel, she regretted not conveying her feelings.

Even though she was a woman, she had accepted a woman as her wife. Moreover, it wasn't objected to. Her attitude left yet another deep impression on her.

She had been envious of the two people that had become Ria's wives.

Saying that much as though vomiting it all out, she added to the end in a small voice—

“I love you.”

To be frank, Ria was overwhelmed.

Hearing that upfront, this was the first time Ria had been told by a girl that they loved her.

“Fio... you like women?”

That's why she asked such a stupid question.

“The one I like... is only Hime-sama.”

Direct.

It was different from the kind of strength Carla had, it was a single-minded strength.

“I love you.”

Fio told that to Ria as she stared at Ria intently, tears forming in her eyes.

(Ah damn. Isn't she adorable?)

When Ria stood up, she reached for Fio's cheek with her hand, bringing her face close.

She kissed the tears collecting on her eyes.

Then, gently, as though handling a fragile item, she embraced her.

“If you're together with me, you won't have children. Well, even if you have an affair and make a child, I don't mind if you return to me though...”

“The one I like... is only Hime-sama.”

Fio shrank into Ria's embrace.

She should take responsibility for her. Ria decided that.

“When my coronation is completed, you will be my third wife.”

Fio's tiny nod indicated she understood.

With the noble that held the rank of duke in Casalia having brought the crown and paperwork from her father, the preparations for the coronation began.

Since Casalia sent a giant army of thirty thousand with him, even the choice of cantonment was difficult.

Because many royal families from the surrounding countries gathered for the coronation, they also had to prepare suitable reception services. Since Ria was a person that fundamentally wasn't full of herself, she went to meet the people that came personally as much as she could.

As expected, due to the workload increasing exponentially, Fio was managing her schedule.

"If you cut down on training time, it would become very easy."

"That's the only thing that's no good!"

Although various trivial events occurred, the coronation day arrived quietly. The duke placed the crown on the stand before the throne. The procedure was for Ria, who naturally dressed herself as a man, to place it on her head herself. Not sitting on the throne, she faced towards the courtiers, the nations' kings, and the ambassadors, raising her arms.

"Long live her majesty the queen!"

Guinevere exclaimed in high spirits. Everyone cheered in chorus.

Archduchess. This was Ria's official position.

When the member of a royal family descends to the status of a subject, it's usually considered to be duke at the highest. This was something exceptional. She had heard how many times her father went through difficult negotiations, but she could only bow her head towards Anise.

Next was the country's name.

At first they considered using Manesh's name to make use of its reputation, but since Guinevere would exist as Manesh's duchess after this, it would be inconvenient.

Then they thought about calling themselves the Cordovan Archduchy with the intent of subjugating Cordova, but anyhow, using Cordova's name would be bad. So then, it was decided to use 'Ogress' in the name.

It was a name from ogres, which were said to be barbaric. However, by daring to use it, they would show their harmony with other races.

For the nobles of surrounding countries, they once again recognized their freedom.

From here on, the _____ Territory would become the Ogress Archduchy. They didn't need to establish all laws and an organization system, but it would happen little by little.

They chose to treat the chosen mayors of Shashmeer and Jaeburg, which were self-governing towns, as non-successive earls.

Incidentally, Vargas was bestowed with the rank of baron.

It would have been inconvenient for a commoner's daughter to be the archduchess' wife after all.

The ogre king as well as the beastkin representatives were also given titles.

At least under Ria, they appeared to intend to obey the duchy.

Not sitting on the throne, Ria remained standing and began her speech.

"Before, when I had traversed a labyrinth, it was revealed to me that the millennium would be upon us within ten years."

It was something that, until now, only a small portion of people knew about. The courtiers stirred greatly.

After waiting a moment, Ria continued to speak.

"This Ogress Archduchy's greatest goal is to survive the millennium."

This was the country's clear vision. And for this, be it country or people, none had reason to oppose it.

"However, before that, there is a problem that must be settled."

Right, as for what was staring them in the face, it wasn't the millennium.

"Invading other countries without reason, Cordova is an evil country that causes wars and must be destroyed. Then, we will return territories to their rightful lords."

There were even nobles that came from countries destroyed by Cordova in the audience now.

Tears shone in their eyes.

"Cordova is a large country. However, we have gathered together under one purpose and are supported by Casalia Kingdom as well. The prospects of our victory are perfectly in our favor. All that's needed is your support."

Here, Ria unsheathed Nagasone Kotetsu, pointing the blade towards the heavens.

"The hammer of justice will fall upon Cordova! Victory shall be ours!"

They were justice.

Believing in that became strength.

Someone repeated ‘Victory’ in a small voice.

Then someone else followed suit. Before long, many voices shouted it out.

Morale within the royal court rose.

With this, they might somehow prevail over Cordova. Even so, she felt uneasy.

No matter how uneasy she felt, she would not let it show on her face.

Shouting to the skies as though on a battlefield, Ria cried out once again.

“Victory!”

Outbreak of a Great War

Even if they'd decided to subjugate Cordova, that didn't mean they could immediately rouse their military.

They first had to prepare their logistics.

Developing Ogress' internal roads, as well as reclaiming farmland that had become hinterlands. Although Serge could use space-time magic for means of transportation, he was just a single person.

There were four main routes being considered for the invasion of Cordova. Three of those had the goal of thoroughly dispersing Cordova's forces.

Manesh's forces, Casalia's forces, the ogre forces, and the beastkin forces had become their primary strength.

There were great expectations placed on the beastkin outside of the battlefield in particular. If humans were sent out on reconnaissance, they would fall far behind the beastkin.

"I want a budget~"

In the meeting, Guinevere moaned just like a spoiled child.

Guinevere's golem cavalry project would require a huge budget.

Where those funds would come from was a problem. As Ogress was a new country, it didn't have organizations that had swelled up uselessly. Even the former Manesh had its center of political strength destroyed by a dragon beforehand, so its organizations had slimmed down.

But it seems that Guinevere had also more or less thought of this too.

"A trade route plan!"

Guinevere's plan was something meant to help stimulate the circulation of money, which they could then levy taxes from.

"That would cause problems for the land reclamation though."

Ria was wholly against it.

"The reclamation won't take long. The golem unit is absolutely necessary. They would change this world's wars."

In fact, Serge also approved of Guinevere's views.

This world's golems would play the same role on the battlefield as tanks did in his previous life. If they fought against Cordova, whose main strength was its infantry, with those, it would become a very powerful countermeasure.

"Although there aren't any guns, this world does have magic..."

Something to one-sidedly trample over the enemy from long distance wasn't readily available. Even so, the number of magic soldiers sent from Casalia would become a threat for Cordova.

The country's future was being decided during a tea party. Serge was taking part in this gathering.

Serge's achievements in perfect logistical management in the previous battle had been recognized, he had become a noble.

With the upstart of a lifetime, and moreover in this age full of exceptional cases, such a position was necessary in order to converse with Ria's group.

Incidentally, his peerage was knight. It was the lowest rank of nobility, but a noble was a noble. Moreover, it was something he earned with his own strength.

"Since the circulation of magic stones and magic crystals from labyrinths have increased, I can also do more golem operation experiments~"

Furthermore, the golems' practical use was also thanks to Serge, as he could easily move them to the front lines.

Although they had been thinking about defensive positions so far, if they used the giant golems in an engagement—or possibly a castle siege—what kind of results would they bring?

There were various things that could be called Cordova's strengths, and as expected their infantry's strength as their foundation could be considered the greatest factor.

They were truly surprised by their obstinacy when they fought them.

Their infantry had been neutralized. The neutralization of an enemy's main force is the most important factor for winning a battle.

"I'd like to turn it into a huge fight as suddenly as possible. Although it'd be great to decide the victory in one go, I want to examine how practical my golems are~"

They should take defensive battles wherever they could. Perhaps, with Cordova's defeat just before, they would soon go out for an attack.

Those expectations were entirely correct.

“An inspection?”

Fio asked with a dubious expression.

“Yeah, since I wanted to go and see the town’s state of affairs.”

“That’s... it certainly might be important, but isn’t it dangerous?”

“I’ll be bringing strong bodyguards so there won’t be any danger.”

The lineup to perfectly remove danger. It was complete.

Ria and Carla. Also with the two strongest people in the country, Irina. With Fio as a retainer, and finally Serge.

“It somehow keenly feels like I’m out of place here.”

“Don’t worry about it, it’s the same for me.”

Serge was secretly speaking with Fio behind them. To be frank, the two of them were the representatives of mediocracy compared to the three in front of them. Those three were hiding their faces within deep hoods. At any rate, even though it was inevitable since their faces were too well known, it was extremely suspicious.

If they were questioned by some sentries, Fio would deal with them. That’s why she was taken along.

There was also another person she wanted to bring along though.

“I really wanted to bring Guinevere along too...”

Ria said that, but Carla objected concisely.

“You had better give up on that. You don’t know where you’ll be wandering to after all.”

With the sun setting, the group advanced.

Manesh’s population didn’t stop being active when the sun went down.

Lights leaked out from street stalls and stores lit up the various people’s faces.

Those people’s expressions were uniformly cheerful.

“What a good country...”

Fio murmured unconsciously.

“By winning against Cordova, Ria brought hope back to the people.”

Carla responded like that.

But the reason why Ria left the palace this evening wasn’t to see this.

A bat flew through the night’s darkness.

Accordingly, Ria went to a remote path separated from the main road. Because Fio couldn't function well in the dark, Serge made a magic light. "Um, where are we..."

The moment Fio began to ask that in worry, a girl appeared.

"Ooh, how are you doing?"

Since Ria called out, neither Carla nor Fio who were meeting the girl for the first time were cautious.

It was a beautiful girl with flaxen hair.

By the way, Fio thought that this girl might also be one of Ria's lovers, but kept that to herself.

"Well, it's just that relations with my colleague aren't going too well."

Asuka was honest as usual.

"You had a quarrel with Rei?"

"No, it's a guy you all don't know about. Well, that aside, how about we move to somewhere else?"

And so by Asuka's guidance, they were lead to a luxury inn in Manesh.

"Welcome back, Ojou-sama."

"Please bring refreshments for everyone."

Asuka ordered in an accustomed tone, inviting everyone into a room.

It was the kind of luxurious room where nobles and wealthy merchants were live in.

"Everyone, sit."

Out of everyone present that sat down following those words, only Carla was still standing.

Her eyes observed Asuka. She probably knew that she wasn't an ordinary person. However, she didn't know her true colors. That made Carla all the more vigilant.

"Carla, it's alright. She's a cooperator with us."

"Right, Dragonslayer-san. If you were serious, couldn't you easily kill me?"

Although Carla wasn't emitting any true blood thirst, she finally sat down on the sofa hearing that.

"Well then, I'll speak about Cordova's situation."

There was a small city-state called Salf in the north. It seemed that Cordova was mobilizing its troops to capture it.

“Three army corps huh.”

More than previously, and furthermore more than double the amount. It was beyond enough war potential to capture Salf.

Although Salf was a relay trade town, that didn’t mean it was that important of a place for military aims.

“Well, if they devote themselves to defending with their castle walls, they won’t immediately surrender. Meanwhile, we can shred the enemy forces’ supply lines.”

Saying that, Asuka looked towards a corner of the room.

“Pineau, come out.”

“Yes.”

Until then, no one had noticed that someone was there.

It was a tiger-striped cat beastkin. He held a sharp expression.

“Pineau is one of our anbu’s commanders. He’s still young, but his skills are reliable.”

That was most definitely right, considering that Ria didn’t notice him despite being in the same room. His hiding abilities were extraordinary.

(Even though he’s still young... compared to a vampire, wouldn’t all beastkin be young?)

“This child’s forces are preparing disruptive activities in Cordova. I dare say it would be given enough damage so that a war of attrition would be impossible.”

Beastkin forces certainly were suited for such activities. Ria and them had primarily been using them as reconnaissance units.

Although things related to Cordova were going well, there was a single problem troubling Asuka.

“Because there are large movements happening in the central part of the continent, I think that I’ll be separated from Rei for a little while.”

The center of the continent. There were talks about Lemdria annexing various towns that had once belonged to the former empire.

If one looked into those movements, they would almost certainly see someone’s hands.

“The Great King Hollyn is at an old age. Although Lemdria should be stable, if something happened to that person it might quickly turn into a rebellion.”

Regarding the millennium, they would probably cooperate with Lemdria to

defend against the demon tribe's invasion. But for now, it wasn't an immediate problem.

(Even so, what really is the millennium? From observing Rei and Asuka, I think it'd be possible for humans and the demon tribe to live together peacefully though.)

"And so, I'd like Pineau to be a liaison, but who should he send messages to?"

"Then I can—"

"I'd be fine—"

Fio and Serge both raised their hands. They certainly were close to Ria, so the two were suitable.

"Serge and..."

"It's Fio—Fiona. I am her majesty's secretary."

Although it the original plan was to make Fio her wife, since there was an immediate problem of not having a substitute, she was still working as Ria's secretary.

As so, Ria still hadn't embraced her. Not in the physical meaning though. In the sexual meaning.

"Understood. Then I'll send information to those two people from here on. Pineau, I'll leave it to you."

"Acknowledged."

The cat beastkin nodded quietly.

Sending Irina and Fio back first, Ria and Serge decided to talk with Carla about everything.

Borrowing a nearby private room with a meal, Ria began to talk.

First, how she met Serge when she started her journey.

That she and Serge were reincarnated individuals from another world.

That she was originally a man, and that's why she had no interest in men.

That she had traversed labyrinths and met with Labyrinth and Valis.

That Irina was the successor of the Golden Dragon Clarice, and that she herself was chosen as Valis' successor, she held nothing back.

After hearing about everything, Carla was lost in thought for some time. But in the end, she asked in her usual tone.

“Is there anyone else who knows about this?”

“There are a few people who know about bits and pieces, but Irina is the only person who knows everything. Well, I get the feeling that that girl doesn’t comprehend everything though.”

Valis had probably sent her along with Ria’s group in order to have her comprehend it.

“Why tell me?”

“Because, I thought it’d be fine to talk about it if it’s you.”

In truth, she wanted to tell everything to her comrades that she entrusted her life to.

But if in the case that her secrets were exposed out, it’d be different if they had the strength to cover it up. Carla had that strength.

“Ria, you place too much trust in me.”

Carla spoke with an unusually embarrassed expression.

“For example... I might speak with Guinevere-sama about this, and someone might overhear.”

“If Carla decides it’s fine, it can’t be helped. That’s just what trust is.”

“Right right, I’m confident that I’d chat about everything immediately if I started getting tortured or something!”

Carla smiled at Serge’s banter.

During their meeting the next day, Cordova’s forces invading Salf was announced.

This was information that not even the intelligence chief had gotten yet, but assuming it came from their queen’s personal connections, they believed her and would move their army.

Of course they held some reservations about it, but that same information was brought in and confirmed one day later.

As for the advance troops, Ria declared that she would personally command three thousand cavalry herself and expressly head to Salf.

There were dissenting opinions of course, but she wouldn’t budge on it.

“Salf decided to fight a defensive siege. In this situation, it’s necessary to preserve our ally’s morale.”

For that, the queen would personally go to the front. This would show the most

extreme effect.

And apart from that, they also organized forces to invade Cordova's own country. They also sent out directions to organize and march to each lord that was bordering Cordova.

This great war that would later be called Cordova's Upheaval was about to begin.

Besieging

The three thousand cavalry lead by Ria were mostly Manesh Kingdom's cavalry that tasted victory in that battle.

Accompanying their journey, Ria made use of the two precious dragoons lent to her by Casalia.

They could attack from above in battles or use their famous charging capability that was even stronger than cavalry's, but Ria decided to use them specifically for reconnaissance.

"You aren't considering us as war potential?"

"Although flying dragons certainly are strong, they are powerless before the might of an army. It'd be different if we could integrate many of them into our army like Casalia though."

Those who accompanied her on this march were Carla, Fio, and Serge, with everyone else house-sitting.

Shizuna, who was not well versed in the operation of cavalry, was also house-sitting. To be accurate, she was scheduled to go along with the large army that would cut off Cordova's retreat.

The only exception was Serge, he was once again drafted as the essential supplies transporter for the siege. He was currently on Rudolph's back.

"Well, if we don't fight, that's also fine."

The strategy was simple. Force Cordova's troops to stay in Salf, break apart their supply lines with beastkin troops.

Manesh and Casalia's combined armies would make Cordova's only choice be to give up the capture and return home.

Then the troops that departed from Salf would attack Cordova's armies from behind, forming a pincer attack.

"Will it go that well?"

The night before they arrived at Salf, the four top executives gathered in a tent. Even though Carla had seen Ria break Cordova's forces with her magnificent ability, she was uneasy.

This was Fio's first time on a campaign, her lips were pale from the stress.

"Well, it probably won't go that well."

Ria said so plainly.

"The first problem is whether or not Salf can endure Cordova's troops."

Ria gave the uneasy elements one-by-one.

"Cutting off the enemy's supply lines as well, they might be vigilant for it this time. It's doubtful whether or not we can catch the enemy's army with good timing with our forces. And whether or not we can win, that relies on if everything goes smoothly..."

"Our military forces number sixty thousand people with just our current army, more should come out from Salf, but..."

For Fio that had received military training as a knight, she thought they could win if they succeeded holding again the seige. Because the enemy numbered thirty-six thousand, they had almost twice their number.

"Cordova usually wins against countries that have even two or three times their number though..."

Even in their recent battle, their infantry persevered greatly. Their cavalry had also withdrawn from the battlefield splendidly.

If it weren't for the ogres' charge, even though they wouldn't have lost, they probably wouldn't have gained a complete victory either.

"Well, we have various secret weapons, so let's go playing it by ear."

Saying that, Ria closed the strategy meeting.

Seeing the town of Sia, Ria thought it was crude.

Enclosed by a mote and rampart, it was a typical fortress city. However, the moat was narrow and the walls were low. It wasn't a defense made with being attacked by armed forces taken into consideration.

"We welcome your majesty's arrival."

When the mayor went up out to greet Ria, she decided to immediately set out to inspect the city's defenses.

"The moat's shallow."

"We haven't been attacked by enemy forces for years..."

"The walls are low, too."

"This is also for the same reason..."

Though she wasn't particularly laying the blame on him, the mayor's voice

quickly became small.

“How many soldiers are there?”

“Three thousand between mercenaries and guards, five thousand volunteers.”

Although that couldn’t be considered a small number, the volunteers held children, those that couldn’t move well due to injury, and unsteady old men.

“Carla, heal the sick and injured. Fio, select those that can’t fight for logistical support.”

The volunteers that they could use were, at most, half of them.

“What about weapons and defensive equipment?”

“We are preparing them still now... all of our blacksmiths are working in full force.”

They probably wouldn’t finish in time. Although than mercenaries and the guards that already had weapons, Ria would still have to make enough for the volunteer soldiers.

When she looked at their current armory, many of the items were lacking maintenance and many of the weapons were unable to be used.

“Are there any logs?”

“... Logs?”

“Logs. Along with dropping them on enemies that try to scale the walls, they can be used to strengthen the walls.”

“I do not know. I’ll search.”

Ria’s genesis magic could not make wood. At worst, even though she could make huge sticks of metal, it would consume a massive amount of magical power.

There weren’t enough arrows either. Ria would have to make those as well.

“You seem to be pulling water from the river to the east huh. Are you concerned about the river’s flow being stopped?”

“We’ve heard stories about Cordova’s military engineering force, but it should be impossible with a mere ten or twenty days. We have a well, too.”

“And your food storage?”

“About ten days’ worth if we ration it. We are continuing to gather more even now.”

(I see. That’s plenty.)

“First, dredge the moat. They could currently pass through it easily.”

Even while saying this, Ria made the moat deeper with her magic.

When carrying the soil drawn up onto the walls, the walls would be strengthened by using hardening magic.

Carla saw to healing the injured, there were many soldiers that said they could fight if their old wounds were healed as well. Although it would take an extra amount of magical power to make old wounds look natural once again, it was even so a good thing that they could get more experienced fighters to join them.

Night by night, Ria would busily create armor and weapons.

First, she created enough spears for the people. Then, she needed to make arrows. Same with armor, they were all the same type but she made them strong.

“What kind of weapons are used in castle sieges fought in this world?”

Serge asked while storing the produced weapons and armor. Incidentally, Carla was already asleep to restore her magical power and Fio was busy at work assigning staff members.,

“I think it’d be generally the same as our previous world, but... maybe they use catapults a lot? With this town’s walls, long ladders might be effective.”

“Well, there is magic.”

“Yeah. However, even if you can prevent magic with magic, science cannot be prevented by magic.

That is, surprise was also a weapon.

“But that oil... It has more uses than I thought at first huh, that genesis magic.”

“That cyclops would be an easy win now.”

Their enemy that should have arrived after three days finally arrived four days later.

Moreover, their siege weapons that should have been prepared practically couldn’t be seen at all.

She knew since she had received a report about it from Pineau, but it seemed that they went to conduct arson on the Cordovan army’s weapons. It was news she was thankful for.

The Cordovan army cordially made their encampment, starting to enter battle formation from there.

Although Salf had gates in the south, north, and west, it seemed the majority of

their efforts would be on attacking the west gate.

Ria had set herself up there. For the enemies to the south and north, she chose experienced people from the mercenaries and volunteers to be commanders.

Although there was a cavalryman sent to the front of the gate to recommend their surrender, he was sent back running by stones tossed at him before he could finish conveying it all. It was a small mercy that they didn't use arrows on him.

Then, the battle began.

The Cordovan infantrymen held up their shields, rushing into the moat. They then began to throw sandbags into it.

Meanwhile, arrows were shot from Salf towards them, steadily damaging the attackers that were disadvantaged.

"So they came with sandbags huh... Well, we probably would have barbecued them if they used ladders."

The dragoons soared overhead, examining the their allies' movements.

Making a detour to the northwest, they seemed to be obstructing Cordova's troops from behind. Like this, it would be their win if Salf didn't fall before they could see their enemy's backs.

"Lose the fire arrows!"

Following Ria's instruction, fire arrows were shot towards the moat.

The oil covering its surface igniting, black flames rose up.

Though this kind of measure should have been saved for later if one took reclamation into account, considering their opponent, it couldn't be helped.

In the end, that day's battle came to a close with mutual arrow-fire from each side's camp after the moat caught on fire.

On the second day, the enemy's attack target became clear.

They were still predominantly attacking the west gate, concentrating their small catapults and archers on it.

Although they could cope with it, Carla's existence was, as expected, foul play.

Soldiers that normally wouldn't have been able to continue fighting after receiving arrow wounds were healed in the blink of an eye.

Since they could even resurrect the dead, their defensive capabilities didn't fall.

Although she could use revival magic, about twenty people per day seemed to be

her limit though.

In the early morning of the third day, she sent out the dragoons to perform reconnaissance behind the enemy.

As Asuka said, their supply base was destroyed.

However, when they landed to examine in depth since they felt no danger, it turned out the base was not only destroyed, but the defending forces were almost entirely annihilated as well.

This was different from Asuka and Pineau's manner of doing things. Not just achieving the goal, but also continuing to kill the enemy. This was probably that new demon king's army's executive that Asuka had spoke of.

Although they were allies with each other this time, this was different from Ria's policies. She wasn't there though, so she couldn't complain.

And to add to that, they obtained information that the Ogress army arrived from their detour march on the route that cut Cordova's army off from its own country.

Since the Cordovan army sent out many scouts, they had probably already obtained this information. So long as the enemy commanders weren't incapable, they should have been thinking about signaling for a retreat.

Because it was necessary to command the defense during the day, Carla could be found with the wounded soldiers during the morning.

"Your majesty, to be at such a place yourself..."

"Don't worry about it. For soldiers that fight directly, this is all that I can do."

Saying so, she treated the soldiers' injuries.

Being conscious that their own commander was looking out for them raised their morale. Predicting everything, Ria made her way through the tents.

Even if she was an ordinary mage, she would definitely have done the same thing. But right now, she was expected to do things that brought meaningful outcomes.

Carla moved to Ria's side and clasped her hand.

She was surprised. Even if she approved of her drawing closer, Carla almost never took the initiative in touching.

"You are deep in thought, I understand that you're doing everything."

Carla, who was clasping her hand strongly, let go before long.

“No matter what you do, I am your ally.”

Carla’s gaze was gentle. Her eyes like the sky seemed to take in and understand everything.

“Me too, that goes without saying.”

“Yeah yeah, even if Nee-chan banters a bit, that’s alright.”

Though Serge spoke carefreely, right now, he likely didn’t understand just how valuable a person that could talk to her like that was.

Because he didn’t know that, she was grateful.

On the morning of the fourth day, the Cordovan army started its retreat. Seeing that, shouts of joy rose from the walls. They had repelled the Cordovan army.

“We did it, your majesty.”

After she responded to the mayor’s joyful smile with one of her own, her face did a complete change and looked serious.

“Prepare for pursuit. Collect volunteers that aren’t exhausted.”

“Pursuit? But the enemy hasn’t exhausted itself much...”

As he said, the army retreated because it was an order. However, Ria understood this was a crucial moment.

“The Ogress army and the Cordovan army will attack head on. At that time, attack from the side.”

Even though they’d successfully defended against the siege, it would be useless if they lost the essential battle. They would immediately attack Salf once again.

Salf was small, but it was a strategic location. If it fell, the circulation of magic stones and magic crystals from the Dark Labyrinth and Manesh would be obstructed.

Thereupon, Guinevere would get angry.

“After resting for today, we will begin our pursuit tomorrow! Mercenaries and volunteers, only those who want to!”

Ria’s declaration resounded through the plaza where the soldiers had gathered.

“I volunteer!”

She recognized the person that recognized his hand. It was the person who Ria

sucked out the pus for and healed.

“Me too!”

“I’ll go too!”

“I’ll go anywhere for her majesty!”

Officers and men filled with morale gathered before Ria. Pitiable, daredevil soldiers. Those that Ria held dear.

In the end, other than Ria’s cavalry, seven thousand would participate in the pursuit.

This trade city Salf was mobilizing practically all of its forces.

A Battle of Pursuit

For the battle between the Ogress army and the Cordovan army, it started advantageous for the Ogress army.

First of all, Cordova was fighting to withdraw and did not have enough goods on hand. That's why it wasn't possible for them to set up their usually strong encampment.

So with the Ogress army facing them in the eyes, and without even the previous encampment to retreat to as well, they had to take formation and fight.

Meanwhile, the Ogress army had completed all of its preparations.

They occupied the strategic positions and attacked the Cordovan army from the high ground.

I was commanded by the Casalian knight order's vice-captain, Reyas. He was a militaristic man renowned even in other countries.

He had Casalia's thirty thousand infantry assault them head on.

They were facing Cordova's infantry, which numbered the same. And although their skill was about equal with each other, Cordova had more experience.

Manesh's thirty thousand soldiers were gradually encircling the Cordovan army. As for Cordova's cavalrymen, about the same number of cavalrymen were holding them back.

So far their equipment had been overwhelmingly better, so for Cordova that had completed enhanced training, this was the first time they had faced forces that fought evenly with them.

Until then, they oppressed their enemies, encircled them, and trampled their very existences.

Contrasting that, Casalia and Manesh's entire armies were given equipment by their nations and trained. They were not an army that would just bend over for them.

And so if there was no difference in their soldiers' qualities, the main problems became strategy and numbers.

As for strategy, the Cordovan army that had acquired actual combat experience

surpassed them regarding things related to organic militaristic movements. However, most importantly, their numbers were different. Their cavalry was being encircled and prevented from doing their job, and their infantry was half surrounded by double their number. In that kind of a situation, the fact that Cordova's control hadn't collapsed was abnormal.

So Reyas, seeing how it was playing out, instinctively wanted to let out a sigh. However, that would be bad for him to do. As long as this perfect situation continued, they probably wouldn't be able to lose. However, the enemy's forces held up their defense and they didn't have the strength for a final push. Fighting for half of a day, Cordova still hadn't given way. Usually, it wouldn't be off for order to have already collapsed.

As for the military strength they had on reserve, there were one hundred ogre troops. If they could leverage their ballistic strength, they might be able to win. But if they couldn't do it with that either, they would probably have no choice but to retreat from injury and consider it a draw.

On the other hand, even if they gradually wore down their opponent through a war of attrition, it couldn't be called that good of a method.

Cordova still had a large amount of soldiers left in their own country and it wasn't like that for the Casalian forces. Casalia's reinforcements were scheduling a second group, but their ability to mobilize couldn't match Cordova's due to the distances involved.

Not to mention Manesh's soldiers, they were elites. It would take time to restore them if they lost even one.

They could win if forced into a battle of attrition. However, it would mean their defeat in the war as a whole.

Reyas instinctively held respect towards the enemy's troops and commanders. However, a war couldn't come to an end with just respect.

"Have the ogre troops charge."

Their strongest war potential pierced into Cordovan lines head on.

Even so, Cordova's battle formation didn't collapse.

Reyas couldn't help but wonder just what kind of training their troops went through to endure this colossal disadvantage.

He began to think about some means to end the battle.

Then, Ria's army arrived.

Having just experienced a victorious battle under Ria's command, there were seven thousand dauntless soldiers.

They struck directly at the back of the Cordovan army.

Although Cordova didn't relax its guard, Ria's army was simply too fast.

"Follow me!"

Ria shouted at the lead, entering the sea of the Cordovan army.

If they defeated a general, they could be promoted. With that thought, the rest recklessly thrust in as well.

Cordova's forces collapsed.

Their leaders' location was at the back of their infantry forces, but Ria's charge annihilated them as well.

Although they obviously didn't kill everyone, they terminated their entire chain of command.

From this moment, the Cordovan army was no longer an army. It became a group of free soldiers.

Carla and Fio lead the cavalry to look over the battle from a slightly elevated hill.

They were certainly winning the battle. However, they couldn't see Ria among the soldiers.

"Carla-sama... aren't you worried?"

Fio asked in a whisper. The reason was because Carla held a nonchalant attitude.

"I can't say that I'm not worried. However, just how strong is that person? I know, as I've fought her directly."

"Eh, Carla-sama has fought with Hime-sama?"

She was surprised and didn't know that Ria had defeated Carla, who had even killed a dragon. The reason is because Guinevere didn't wish for the information to spread.

"Yes. It was my complete defeat. That girl is likely stronger than even a dragon. Even if she were staring down not even thirty thousand troops but three

hundred thousand, it wouldn't make a difference. Someone that could defeat her may only be someone like the hero or demon king."

She had thought that Ria's strength was about the same as Reyas' from back in Casalia. However, even a person who had killed a dragon was no match for Ria. Fio gained a new worry as to how she'd managed to confess to someone as outrageous as that.

"Soon it will be the infantry's turn."

Carla muttered. The collapsing Cordovan infantry was quickly being killed off. The cavalrymen that saw this happening attempted to escape towards their home, Cordova.

"Serge, Fio, please do not stray from me."

At Carla's words, both Serge who was on Rudolph's back and Fio who was mounted on a horse tensed.

However, Serge used natural law magic and didn't sense any hostile reactions.

Cordova's injuries continued to spread.

It even had to continue fighting with its path of retreat cut off.

The final blow was dealt by Carla's three thousand cavalry sweeping down.

Just like its infantry, Cordova's cavalry also collapsed.

Those cavalrymen that had attempted to escape were caught by the Ogress army's cavalry and killed this time.

The final damages were twenty thousand taken captive with eight thousand killed or wounded. This was an unthinkable victory.

The casualties they suffered amounted to less than one tenth of that.

The Ogress cavalrymen obstinately chased the Cordovan soldiers that ran away.

Crossing national borders, they continued chasing all the way until they reached a gigantic constructed fortress.

Ria nearly spearheaded into it, but stopped just before the fortress.

Naturally, all of the cavalry stopped as well. Reyas, who was leading them, naturally stopped as well.

"Your highness! If we continue to charge, we can take the fortress."

Reyas' heart had become hotblooded. They had successfully completed a

landslide victory against Cordova. Those military results were necessary to use for maximum gain.

However, Ria was calm.

"The purpose of this battle was to rescue Salf and destroy Cordova's army. That has already been achieved."

"But if we use this chance, we can capture the fortress!"

There was something known as momentum in war. With their current power, they could even overrun this impregnable fortress. That was Reyas' view.

But as Ria said, that was not the purpose for this battle.

"We already have tens of thousands of Cordovan infantry prisoners to process, but we are not finished yet. With what we have on hand, could we head to the next battle? With the war potential being three times as much at most?"

Speaking to there, Reyas also saw what Ria was speaking of.

They had successfully repulsed Cordova's army. This would very likely be hugely impactful for propaganda.

And they had to process the prisoners of war. This was certainly also important. And yet still, Reyas still seemed to lose to the temptation of capturing the fortress before them.

"Don't worry about it, Reyas."

Ria spoke with an attitude that exuded composure.

"If it's just a fortress at that level, we could defeat it immediately."

Since her words were spoken too naturally, Reyas blinked.

"That fortress...?"

When he looked back towards the towering, majestic fortress, he felt that it couldn't just be rushed down with brute strength.

However, since Ria was the one to say it, it might be true.

Holding a curious understanding, Reyas nodded.

As a matter of fact, the contriving of capturing the fortress had nothing to do with Ria.

At any rate, she hadn't collected the information yet either. So if they did something like assaulting the fortress, she just intuitively felt like something bad would happen.

(But it will definitely fall.)

Bearing a strong determination in her chest, for now, Ria turned her back on the fortress.

"Did she notice at this distance...?"

Far away from the battlefield, standing on the branch of a large tree in the wilderness, Ordo muttered.

After accomplishing his duty, he overlooked the battlefield. In that army that followed pursuit, the black and silver pair stood out.

As for the black-haired one, that one could be ignored. His male instincts had no reaction towards her.

However, the silver-haired one was different. Dragonslayer. He was perhaps even unable to be a match for her, the strongest war potential on the humans' side.

While imagining himself pressing that Heroine-sama down and staring at her, he realized that he was noticed.

He certainly wouldn't be able to win through normal means. Then, how could he?

"Well, it's fine. It's still not the right time."

They were allied with Ogress for now. That was the demon king's command. It was in his very nature to be unable to oppose the demon king's orders.

But at the same time, the demon king was known to be lenient on his subordinates. As long as he'd known him, he had never purged his subordinates.

At most he would probably send them away from his sight.

Ordo didn't think himself capable of opposing the demon king.

Raising his status through battles, becoming even stronger, and then at some point in the future, fighting with his majesty.

His feeling towards the thrill of battle being even like ecstasy, Ordo grinned as he bared his fangs.

Reinforcements

As for the Cordovan soldiers that surrendered, or rather became wounded prisoners as Ria's way of dealing with them, they were divided into three groups. One group would work on roadworks for three years, being liberated afterwards. This condition somewhat resembled the land reclamation from before, but she was expecting Cordova's military engineers' abilities.

Another group would be released as is, but there was a condition this time. The condition was that they absolutely had to return to their hometowns by all means. The reason for this was because she'd heard that Cordova had treated the soldiers that were liberated before as rebels.

And then there was a third way, but it was the path of working as Ria's bodyguard.

After the soldiers chose their paths, Ria's group went back on the road towards Manesh.

Twenty thousand reinforcements from Casalia awaited Ria's arrival at Manesh, along with some familiar faces.

"Luluuu! Carlos!"

Right, among the reinforcements were the magic corps that Lulu belonged to, as well as the knight order that Carlos belonged to. A reunion after a span of several months.

Even if the troops were gathered as hired soldiers, for the Ogress army that had few commanders, this was very welcome.

After that, Ria heard about the situation in the royal capital from Lulu. Apparently, the confusion from the minister's assassination seemed to have been concluded with the criminal being the a foreign country's subordinate.

Incidentally, there were a lot of second and third sons of penniless nobles among the soldiers sent in the second group.

They were unmistakably there for the war against Cordova with the aim of acquiring plots of land that had lost their feudal lords.

And again, Lulu brought up an incredibly important personal matter.

“Eh? Marriage? You did?”

“No, I haven’t answered yet, but...”

In the queen’s private room, there were her old comrades, as well as all of Ria’s wives. Carlos was left out.

It was the group of everyone concerned. Carlos was left out.

Since he was the one to propose to Lulu.

“Ah... heeh... and so?”

“Well, I’ve been thinking about what to do...”

“So you want to discuss something like that with me huh...”

Ria inclined her head to the side.

(Carlos is a good man. Yep, a good man. Though he contracted that disease known as elf lover, well, there probably won’t be any problems about Lulu being a half-elf.)

He’s devoted, and a gentleman. Ria acknowledged that in their hardships during their travels, he had upheld his charge as a knight. A model noble that couldn’t be found in a whole generation.

His face wasn’t bad either, so she couldn’t think up any particular problems.

However, even Ria was embarrassed being consulted about such a thing.

“What did you say to him for now?”

“To please wait a little.”

“So, what about to yourself?”

Asked that, Lulu’s eyes reddened a little.

“I think he’s a good person. He thinks about me, relies on me, and even if he’s a little unreliable, he’s adorable...”

“If that’s how it is, isn’t your answer decided?”

The battle formation of women nodded. Since even Gig nodded, it must have been obvious.

However, there was a single person that raised their hand.

“I think you should wait until after the war is over before giving your answer.”

It was the youngest, Serge, who should have understood the hearts of women the least.

“Eh? Why?”

Although Lulu asked in puzzlement, Ria understood.

“Right, a flag huh.”

“Yeah. The most supreme flag of them all: ‘I, after this war is over, will marry you!’”

Ria nodded along with Serge, who stressed his sentence.

“That certainly does satisfy the requirements. That’s bad.”

Naturally, the expressions of those in the surroundings became rigid at the two people having such a serious conversation.

“What’s so bad about it~?”

As for Irina’s question, although she was unable to read the feeling in the air, it was a GJ in this case.

“Well, I guess it’s a kind of superstition...”

“Before a war, a soldier would say, ‘I, after this war is over, will marry you!’ Then die in the following battle. That’s the pattern.”

“That’s definitely a superstition.”

Despite being called a saint, Carla, the atheist, cut the thought away cleanly.

“But I’ve certainly seen it a lot in stories.”

Recently, saying that it was for her education as a princess, Shizuna had been reading a lot of books.

“Well, there is a lot of power put into words.”

Ria thought about it logically.

“That’s fine to hold off on. For now, roadwork and reclamation are high priority.”

“I just want the war with Cordova to be over with...”

“For that, please send out supplies by going through those documents.”

“Gaaah. Mou, finish the war sooo~n.”

While Fio was going through and reviewing the documents one by one, there was something she noticed.

“This Black Cat Company sells an incredible amount of goods...”

“The Black Cat Company is a famous delivery company primarily in Lemdria, but there’s a branch in Casalia as well. Although it’s sure to have dealt in Cordova for years as well, they’ve recently changed their policies regarding them.”

In other words, they abandoned Cordova when they realized it would go on the decline.

Clever merchants on the sidelines would judge the information like that, they'd likely even seen Ogress' might as it was well-known now.

"I'd like to meet their company director at least once. How could I get in contact with him?"

"Other than the branch's head, the company director might be a bit difficult to. It seems his name is Yamato, I've practically not heard him meeting people."

"Wait."

Ria spoke reflexively.

"... Black Cat's company director is named Yamato?"

"Yes. It seems to be a name that's succeeded from generation to generation. There's even talk that people who don't already know who he is aren't meant to learn it. Although they more or less refer to themselves as a secret society, everyone knows of them as the Black Cat Company."

"Ooh~, is that so?"

There's probably no mistaking that their founder was a reincarnated person.

"I have a question about their the accumulation of goods too, I'd kind of like to meet their representative. Let's see... the person in charge is Fernoss Crystal... Crystal family huh."

The Crystal family. Although it was Ria's mother's surname, in truth, it wasn't a surname that was handed down through the generations.

It's without doubt a special surname that, as Serge lightheartedly did, labels one as a mage. On the other hand, the magicians that call themselves by this surname are mostly adults.

For example, the same way Ria's mother got this surname from Rufus, Rufus got this surname from Azelford. In Ria's case, since she'd had high magical power since birth, she had naturally been given this surname.

In other words, this Fernoss woman was also someone with considerable magical power.

"Then, I'll confirm the meeting's purpose."

"Yeah, please."

Their routine work more or less handled, Ria unrolled a map on the now-vacant desk.

The map was of Cordova's territory. Although it was obviously not too accurate, it was enough.

"That Cordova could feasibly mobilize five hundred thousand seems like some kind of joke..."

"There are more if you include minors and those in the reserve. But then since they have focus on border control and revolt prevention, they can't use all of them."

"Well, that's how it is. Nevertheless, with that kind of tyranny, how aren't there any revolts?"

It was something that seemed like it should've happened. When she said that, Guinevere looked surprised.

"You don't know? They have a secret information system. If someone tries to incite a revolt, they kill everyone in their family as guilt by association."

"That's horrible..."

Are they North Korea?

"But on the other hand, they'd be incredibly glad about being liberated. No matter how you put it, with an administration that starves them year-round, they'd very likely prefer us."

"But then how could we prepare and distribute enough food for their entire population...? Say what you like, Serge is just one person, he can't do it alone."

It became a problem of logistics.

Through and through, she believed the country called Cordova to be a strong country. It wasn't just their military force that was strong, but that their entire warped country was as though it existed to war with others.

Just why was an entire country established for war? If she had time to, she wanted to look into that.

"When we enter Cordovan territory, we will have one advantage."

"Hou?"

If that's the case, she wanted to hear the advantage.

"That country maintenance fully paved roads. An army's march as well as supplies transportation becomes easy."

"I see, so then first of all maybe we should fell one of their bases on their border somewhere...?"

No.

No no.

More than that, they had to do something that their enemy hated even more.

If they felled one of their opponent's bases, they would be able to freely move into Cordova.

In that case, rather than one, wouldn't it be fine if they felled every feasible base along their borders?

At any rate, their army's strength consisted of Casalia's and Manesh's soldiers. However, they wouldn't be able to defeat Cordova's troops of five hundred thousand without using the armies of other countries.

Ria immersed herself in that thought.

The more a general used their head, the less soldiers needed to be sacrifices.

Although Ria far from hated shedding human blood—she rather loved it—but it was a different story if it was her allies shedding blood for no reason.

“Fio, please arrange meetings for ambassadors and military officers that come in contact with Cordova, as well as with merchants that have business relations with Cordova by tomorrow.”

“But it'll reduce my sleeping hours even more...”

“Well, have Guinevere help with half then.”

“Geh—”

“Though I said that, I will do my best until I can end this war. After it's over, I'll be leaving all of the administration to you all.”

Ria's statesmen didn't think of that remark as irresponsible, but oppositely Guinevere felt good about it for some reason.

The Conference Isn't Dancing

On the next day, the conference for the Cordova invasion's strategy planning began.

Those present were Archduke Ryuken Riana, Regent Guinevere, all cabinet members, the various heads of the army corps, and the great nobles of each country—dukedom's territories.

And in the middle of all of them, Serge.

In the middle of all of them, Serge. So important that it must be said twice.

He wasn't a formal soldier, but a low class noble. He was a young mage, but he took the seat that was directly next to Ria.

"I feel a bit out of place here..."

"Endure it. If we didn't have your transportation capabilities, we wouldn't be able to build this strategy."

"I'm just an ordinary guy though..."

"You'll be given a special two-rank promotion and be turned into a baron when this war is over. You will even be given a good territory. There'll even be a great feast."

"Well, I just want to be alone with a girl... no no, as a noble's duty, maybe multiple people are needed?"

Serge's desires took a peek out on the surface for a moment.

A great number of people entered the large conference room.

Normally, a certain amount of time would be allowed for acquaintances to greet each other. However, Ria would not allow it.

"For assembling here, I thank you all. Though this may be quick, we shall begin creating our Cordovan invasion strategy plan."

A rough map of Cordova was displayed on the wall behind Ria. There were already a few markers placed on it.

"First is our main goal, Cordova must suffer a crushing defeat. Is there anyone in objection to this?"

Ria invoked her Dragon Eyes. Nevertheless, a brave veteran raised his hand.

"Could we cut them off by isolating them economically through an embargo? If

we invade after that, I think it would become easier.”

“That won’t work. First off, Cordova produces enough of its own food to be self sufficient country. And then there is the fact that it is near the sea, it would be near impossible to control smugglers. If we spent the time trying, the Millennium would arrive.

The man consented with a hmpf, but Ria pursued further.

“The Millennium will arrive within the next eight years. This is something that I heard directly from the labyrinth’s master.”

The room became noisy in response to her words.

Those foolish enough to make light of the person named Ria were not here. However, to put faith all of her words, it was hard as a person.

“It will not be possible to fight a country like Cordova with the Millennium on our backs. For this reason, we have no choice but to crush Cordova even a day sooner.”

“We will fight with our lives on the line to liberate our home countries from Cordova!”

The one to shout that was an exiled noble from a country that Cordova had destroyed. Ria merely nodded to his shout.

“Cordova is a large country. The amount of forces that it can mobilize, even after being decreased by our recent fight, should be around 450,000.”

That could be considered a hopeless amount. The nobles here, at most, could arranged between just 20,000 and 30,000.

“On the other hand, the total war potential of our dukedoms exceed 3,000,000.”

Again, her words caused a stir in the conference hall.

‘Do we have forces like that?’ In truth, it was simply Ria’s bluff, but only Guinevere and Fio knew that.

“Then again, those are truly our last-resort measures. Only once the demon tribe attacks during the Millennium would those numbers be helpful.”

When Ria suppressed the disturbance with both of her hands, she returned the topic back to Cordova.

“Among Cordova’s forces are those those that are at the border, and excluding those forces stationed in its capital, its working force is about 200,000. We will defeat these.”

Someone swallowed back their saliva. Even 200,000 could be called a sufficiently hopeless number.

Ria would give them realistic numbers to the last.

"Our reinforcements from Casalia are 50,000. Manesh's army is 50,000. The ogre army is..."

Here, she purposely trailed off. To give a shock, nothing was better than putting on airs as much as possible.

"100,000."

The greatest amount of turmoil thus far was born in the room.

"It is expected that the beastkin's army will be able to arrange 100,000 as well. Although they lack strength on the battlefield, they will be useful in destroying Cordova's prided information network and supply lines."

Just how important would disrupting the rear for their victory against Cordova?

Ria put her strength into explaining it.

"If we include all of the feudal lord's war potentials to this, defeating even Cordova isn't unreasonable. With these numbers, I think you all can understand as well."

Ria ended that topic there.

"Now then, we are definitely invading Cordova, but I believe there are no less than four routes. Not that we will truly divide our army into four parts to invade, but by maintaining the possibility of all four routes, we can keep our enemy from inferring our plans."

She struck three areas from the southern tip to the north-east. Then, the most important part was near its border to Manesh.

To be specific, they would use this route to invade. Manesh's outskirts were grain-producing regions, so it would be suitable for collecting food.

"For the other three areas, I would like to be defended to the last. The aim is to divide Cordova's troops. This I beg of you all."

Ria bowed deeply.

After that, with Ria having requested that of the feudal lords near the invasion points, there was the preparation of siege weapons.

The backbone of their war potential were the armies of Casalia, Manesh, and the ogres. By using this to acquire experience, true elites could be trained.

Although she didn't know what part of Cordova's interior would turn into their

battlefield, concerning the decisive battle, Ria would be counting on these three armies.

They still needed to settle the detailed, but it had been roughly decided on. When she'd asked for comments, a noble who had territory near the coast raised his hand.

"For ships trading with Cordova, what if I issue a pillaging license? Even if Cordova is an agricultural country, that doesn't mean that it doesn't trade. Even if the purpose to disturb its people's hearts, it might be effective."

"Alright. Let's allow it. Provided that you manage it and prepare a time span for it."

"Also, your majesty..."

With a feeling that could be called timid, an aristocrat raised his hand.

Contrasting his behavior, to be able to not flinch despite Ria's glance, he probably had a considerable amount of courage.

"It is a problem of her majesty's partner, but when thinking about the future of the dukedom, as a successor is indispensable..."

Ria sighed very, very deeply.

She knew that his thoughts were common sense, both for nobles and commoners. You could even call it the common sense of any living thing. Leaving descendants.

However, it was impossible for Ria. Thinking that, this was a good opportunity.

"I do not menstruate. In other words, I cannot have children. Even setting aside my homosexuality, there cannot be a successor that inherits my blood."

This time, her statement filled the room in silence.

"There is a skilled doctor in my country..."

"Even the God Dragon Valis said it was impossible. No human could do it."

This time, the noble was at a loss for words.

Towards the archduke that was his lord, he shouldn't have spoken that simply to at all.

"Well, don't worry about it. Even I don't mind it. Rather, if you have a beautiful daughter, send her over for my personal care."

"Yes, certainly!"

What happened for a little while after that moment about that noble sending his beautiful daughter to serve Ria... that's another topic.

“Ah~, so worn out~”

Slowly soaking in the bathtub, Ria groaned. Both of her mounds floated up in the hot water.

“I think you did well! The nobles’ morale went up too.”

Besides Guinevere and the prince, Maal and Irina were also in the bathtub that could be mistaken for a pool.

Irina had Maal washing her hair. She was weak to shampoo.

“I just want to leisurely travel the world, fighting various monsters...”

“Give it up. For now we have to somehow deal with Cordova, it won’t be easy.”

“Compared to domestic affairs, I’d prefer war~”

Although Ria was lamenting, it couldn’t be helped due to her station.

A voice came from outside the bathroom calling for Ria, who was now sinking into the bathtub and sighing loudly under the water.

“Ria-sama. A merchant named Fernoss arrived. I showed her to the parlor.”

“Got it. I’ll be there immediately.”

When she immediately got out of the water as she’d said, she wiped down her body, refusing the maid’s help. Still collecting her hair, Ria entered the parlor holding Nagasone Kotetsu.

Her impression from their first meeting was: ‘What’s up with her?’

Her chestnut hair was cut at shoulder-length, a girl in male attire.

Her eyes were cool and her lips shapely. Though her figure definitely fit Ria’s preference, none of those things were the problem.

“Thank you very much for nominating our firm this time. I serve as the director of the northwest branch, my name is Fernoss Crystal.”

She then stood up. Ria almost instinctively moved to unsheathe Nagasone Kotetsu.

So it was like that.

One who held [Natural Talent in the Sword], so it was like that.

She was level 40, but that couldn’t be it. The tiny bit of magical power that leaked out despite being restrained was, perhaps, even above Serge’s.

She fully unleashed Dragon Eyes. As for what she could then see, first was a talisman equipped at her chest. This was likely a magic tool for recognition inhibition.

“Fernoss, no, is it alright to call you Ferna? Please call me Ria.”

Vehemently, she wanted to fight the girl before her eyes.

Her usual disease.

She wanted to confirm that her swordplay was better. Perhaps, in swordplay alone, this girl was better than Carla.

“Terribly gracious, then I shall call you Ria-sama.”

“Then Ferna, as for the thing concealing your ability, it’s that talisman on your chest right? Or is it some magic?”

With a start, Ferna stopped moving.

She lowered her center of gravity. Seeing her shift in weight, Ria grasped Nagasone Kotetsu.

Despite her opponent being barehanded.

“For Black Cat... as it is a business, we have certainly invested into Cordova. Nevertheless, we have changed our plans and from now on shall be doing business with Ogress Dukedom-sama alone.”

Although Ferna was nervous, she wasn’t afraid. Did she think that she could deal with Ria even if she unsheathed Nagasone Kotetsu?

However, Ria wasn’t stupid enough to actually pull out her katana here.

“I anticipate Black Cat’s transportation capabilities. We are also being treated favorably.”

Then, Ria indicated the sofa, motioning for Ferna to sit.

“What I want to say is... right... there was still a master like you as an anonymous person? What level is your swordplay? 8, 9? Or maybe 10?”

“I wonder? As a merchant, information is one of my commodities...”

“Hmm... Black Cat has seized the flow of goods through the continent... with its power of money, does it plan on dominating the world behind the curtain?”

“Nonsense! We simply wish to earn people’s words of thanks and their smiles, we only transport luggage safely.”

From her words alone, they seemed to be spoken from the bottom of her heart.

“Well, I didn’t say to tell me everything. I’ll be relying on you from now on.”

Ria presented her right hand, which Ferna grasped with both of hers.

“Ah, Ferna-san, how did it go?”

Leaving from the royal palace, Ferna saw Halt’s always calm face and almost collapsed.

“What happened? You look pale you know? Were there any unreasonable demands?”

No. No!

It wasn’t nothing at that level.

“I felt like my life was in danger...”

She instinctively confirmed the sword was still hanging at her waist. As long as she had it, she could somehow manage to escape.

“That queen was scary after all?”

“Mou, yes! It’s a huge difference seeing her up close!”

She saw her fight with the Dragonslayer, but when she actually drew close, the bloodthirst emitted from her was different. It was majestic. There’s no way that could come from a 15-year old girl.

“Well, according to other people, Ferna-san is the scary one.”

Since he said something upsetting, Ferna beat against Halt with a thud.

“Although the business talks were settled, there is a vast amount of arranged goods. Could Halt-san help as well?”

“Yeah, I originally planned on concentrating on Ogress after all.”

Seeing his natural smile, Ferna finally felt some of her nervousness ease.

On the way to head out together with Ferna for dinner, Halt looked back at the royal castle once again.

One who had defeated the Dragonslayer, as well as traverse the labyrinth. Moreover, showing a talent for war and opposing the militaristic country of Cordova.

There were still a few years until the Millennium. His choice was here.

(I don’t want to fight...)

Halt felt that from the bottom of his heart, following Ferna.

Siege Warfare

The operation to invade Cordova began.

According to the plan, they would first attack the fort at the southern end of the border.

Their number was truly 150,000.

Even so, it was not an attack that relied on numbers. It was a long-ranged assault left to magic and catapults, with things such as combat engineers securing sources of water. The fight began in a sober fashion.

On a nearby hill, Ria was watching the attack without particularly paying attention to it and was currently grappling with law-related documents.

The Ogress Archduchy was a union of countries. Laws that would become its constitutional model were needed.

Although Guinevere had demonstrated that she had more than enough ability for things concerning the technical and trade side of things, she also didn't have much expertise in the creation of laws.

Therefore, while seeing that their attack on this front was one-sided, Ria went over discussions related to postwar legislation with her staff.

And for their model, Cordova would have to be overthrown. This was a vital point.

"Fio, that one next. Serge, look at this."

With the knowledge of his previous life in Japan, Serge was helpful.

Although he didn't come from something like a law school, as he had received the usual history lessons, he knew about transitional law reasonably well.

"Nee-chan, this here, no matter how you look at it, isn't it too soft?"

Nowadays, even in the army Serge's name for Ria was fixed as [Nee-chan].

"Ah, the people of Cordova have suffered tyranny for years. If they experience even one bit of kindness, they'll never try to revolt."

"Hmmm, I'm sure that laws are better being severe than gentle, read that in some book..."

"That's the Chinese tradition for raising children. What you're thinking of is governments under a benevolent ruler should be as amicable and gentle as

water, but it's best to use strict policies for a populace used to a ruler lacking benevolence."

With three forts defeated, the Ogress army turned itself towards the fortress that was its ultimate goal.

It was different from the other three forts. Its moat was deep, its walls high and thick. The amount of soldiers currently residing in it numbered 30,000, it was a strategic location for Cordova that was on complete lock down.

Mardass Fortress. Previously, Ria gave up on capturing this fortress and withdrew. Although it was the logical judgement at the time, now that she'd seen it so reinforced, she didn't think it would be like this.

Although Reyas didn't say anything in particular, there were probably other people who also harbored doubts about Ria's judgement at the time.

"Now then, breaking through head-on would be a bad idea. On the other hand, taking a detour to block its supply lines would disturb it. We didn't prepare enough to provoke betrayals, is there some way to bait them out...?"

More or less, Ria had a plan to easily capture this fortress. Even so, it was something that couldn't truly be called a plan.

If Ria and several of her comrades raided the front gate, the capture would be done with that. It would be even better if they took the opportunity to assassinate their leading commanders.

However, politically, what should she do?

If she went in first, her generals would circle her indignantly.

As for soldiers dying on the battlefield, Ria thought it was natural.

However, having one's soldiers die on the battlefield for no reason was a commander's negligence.

Most likely, no one thought about keeping their soldiers alive in warfare like Ria did. Even so, Ria wanted to value her soldiers' lives.

Capturing Cordova could be called the semifinals. The real thing would be the all-out war against the mysterious demon tribe.

(Will I have to kill Rei and Asuka...?)

Despite having such a depressing thought, Ria couldn't afford to stop thinking about it.

The Fortress

“A... hole?”

“Yeah. More accurately, a trench.”

The Mardass Fortress capture route would start with simple work.

For this fortress that existed on high ground, they would approach while digging a trench in a zigzagging pattern.

In this world thus far, that strategy did not exist.

This Mardass Fortress capturing battle would leave its mark on history.

And so, it began with simple work.

“Now that we’re actually trying it, it certainly does seem like a good idea. How did her majesty come up with this?”

Although Reyas spoke his admiration, she couldn’t exactly respond saying that it was cheat knowledge from her previous life. She simply met glances with Serge and laughed.

Nevertheless, it was weird that even though using dugouts was already thought of, why hadn’t this been developed? She wanted to demand the Japanese reincarnators to reflect their actions.

“It’s not simple digging, it’s best to dig in diagonal directions. That way, even the enemy’s magic attacks would have their power decreased.”

That was the reason, just digging normal trenches wouldn’t be able to protect against things like fire and wind magic.

Therefore, the concept of digging diagonal trenches was never thought of.

With the usual earth magic, it would be easy enough to make walls. But walls of that level wouldn’t be able to defend against catapults.

Now then, Cordova’s strategy was refined.

However, although it was refined, it was not innovative.

Even if they were familiar with the uses of weapons, they felt somewhat lacking in the improvement of their weapons. Technology was the only weak point in Cordova’s military force.

Even though there was a huge difference between their numbers, due to the difference in the performance of their weapons, their losses were about equal.

And now that their losses were equal, how many they could recover became important.

There was Carla for that.

Though she was a wielder of tremendous healing magic, Ria adjusted how much magical power Carla could use so that she would always have more than half remaining.

Even in the case where someone was dying right in front of them.

Even if right then she would be able to bring them back from death's icy grip.

She was limited in how much magical power she could use in a single day.

"Viscount-sama died in battle!"

"Carla! Use your revival magic!"

Because of things like this.

The loss of a senior commander, depending on the circumstances, could be more of a wound to their forces than even the loss of a thousand soldiers.

Much more so with the person who had died just then, he was a renowned old and grizzled general.

Carla's magical power was reserved for times like this.

While drinking magical power restorative medicines, Carla revived the viscount.

Death was gifted evenly on this battlefield. However, life was not.

Little by little, day by day, the fortress' defensive strength was whittled away.

"Should we use it?"

Ria spoke. A week had passed since the battle with the fort began.

What did she speak of? It was something that had been prepared before the siege battle, a weapon that hadn't been used in the end.

As she had developed it herself, she knew that it would prove considerably effective once used.

What was the weapon? Black powder.

Because this world developed through magic, the progress of its science went slowly. Even fundamental studies like mathematics were irregular.

Ria was capable of producing the materials needed for black powder through her magic as it wasn't a magical material.

Making black powder, adding a fuse, and including scraps of iron to improve its

lethality, she'd completed an imposing kind of bomb.

By using their catapults, it could be thrown directly into the middle of the enemy's lines.

Be it fire magic or wind magic, by countering the magical power itself, the effect could be eliminated.

However, there was no magical power in a black powder explosion.

Even with magic that prevents all physical effects, as the magical defense is meant to diffuse magical power, it couldn't block a detonation's ballistic shock.

It would take a little time before the enemy mages noticed that fact.

And that little amount of time was more valuable than anything else on a battlefield.

Ria hesitated only for a short while.

Taking advantage of the enemy's confusion, they could attack all at once. By their original plan, they had planned on whittling away their enemy's morale and forces for a little longer, but right now might be the perfect chance.

"After launching another volley of intense catapult and magical attacks on the enemy, put everything we have into charge."

Ria's command spread through the entire army.

As the ones that would be the spearhead, the ogre soldiers were pumped up.

Bellowing with their battle cries, they rushed out from the trenches.

The enemy's archers pierced the soldiers.

However, they leapt over their allies and grappled onto the rampart.

Large ladders were placed onto the rampart. Soldiers that attempted to climb up them were doused with burning oil.

The losses sustained were greater than Ria had thought.

Even so, she reaffirmed her decision, and seeing the chance to win, there was no possible way she would raise the signal to withdraw.

"Nee-chan, should I at least destroy the gate?"

The castle gate was made of steel, strong enough such that even powerful magic likely wouldn't penetrate it. If they could break it, soldiers could quickly dash inside.

However, the problem was that that sort of magic would attract attention.

"It can't go down as your achievement. It'd be bad if people realized it was you."

"I get it. That's all then?"

"... Please. Irina, protect him too."

"Kay~"

Even with the possibility of there being a danger that might befall Serge in the future, there were military results to be had right now.

Thinking about it logically, it was important to think about his safety first and foremost.

Even so, Ria desired Serge's attack.

"Understood."

And so, Serge and Irina rushed out of the trench.

He looked at the fortress' almighty gate. It had magical defenses, strong ones. Even if ten ordinary mages gathered to try, it wouldn't be damaged.

However, Serge had space-time magic. As well as the new skill bestowed to him by Valis.

[Chant Annulment]

Chant annulment and chant abbreviation, for mages, were the strongest ammunition.

Amplification. Acceleration. Acceleration. Acceleration.

Serge's magic was amplified, using acceleration after acceleration.

And then, Explosion Teleportation.

The current Serge was able to invoke magic with time to spare.

That imposing gate warped together with an explosive roar, opening.

As the gate had opened and bent, it wasn't able to be shut again.

Through that space, the daredevil soldiers rushed in.

The battle's outcome had been decided.

Units could not come together to form a formation inside the fortress, so individual fighting strength meant everything.

For that, the ogres held a monopoly.

With their sharpened weapons, blunt weapons, or even their fists.

They cut, beat, and crushed their enemies.

Severed limbs flew through the air, teeth scattered about, and faces were bashed in.

The streaming blood formed a river, there were even soldiers that lost their footing and fell in it.

Revved up ogres didn't discriminate between friend or foe. Everyone fled from them in a panic.

The enemy's commander was a rational man.

Because he was rational, he wasn't unreasonable. Reaching these circumstances, he fled from the fortress with his officers.

"The enemy's head ran away!"

"The enemy commander escaped!"

Such voices came from the beastkin reconnaissance unit.

That it was a fact, the remaining soldiers in the fortress were deprived of their will to fight.

Even the forces that had still continued to bravely fight threw down their arms in hearing that.

"I surrender, I surrender!"

"I surrender, don't kill me!"

"Please, I surrender!"

And as such, the Mardass Fortress capture had concluded.

Looking at the result by itself, it was a landslide victory for the attackers.

Of course, dealing with the postwar processing was a serious matter. Starting with the damaged gate, there were many facilities that had become unusable.

They would need to be mended, as well as them needing to prepare for the enemy counterattacks that would very definitely be arriving soon.

Using the siege weapons as defensive weapons as is, their problem was what to do with the corpses.

As the ogres were a bit too tenacious this time, there were a staggering amount of victims.

Since Carla had also used a lot of her magical power, as expected she didn't have the luxury of reviving the enemy's casualties.

"If I had to say something, I guess it'd be that it's unfortunate we didn't get the enemy's leadership."

She knew that she shouldn't hope for perfection from war, but she still felt that.

For instance, eight ogre soldiers were lost this time.

Or perhaps they should be called eight people?

Ria preferred it that way.

Several days were spent surveying the situation for repairing the fortress. The recapture army never came.

"The provinces in this area were just recently annexed, so they might be having trouble gathering soldiers."

One of the staff officers gave that sort of explanation. Indeed, even Cordova, a country that boasted of its iron rule, after being defeated repeatedly, would likely lose some of the iron grip that restricted its people.

"Call on the beastkin, we'll increase our scouting. If they find beastkin settlements, see if they could negotiate and see if they want to join us."

At present, Cordova's army comprised of only humans. It was a lucky thing. If there were something like a great meow meow march of cat beastkin carrying spears, even Ria didn't think she could be cold-hearted enough to give cruel orders against them.

So that they wouldn't also start applying that sort of mental attack, she needed to liberate the beastkin as soon as possible.

Beastkin ran to the villages, with their forces dispatched close to the human villages as well. Ria, who had given them orders, decided to return to Manesh temporarily.

Reyas was established as the commander of the fortress, with the staff officers as well. The only people following Ria would be her bodyguards and secretary. Although there would be more tales regarding her once again if assassins arrived, they reached Manesh with no problems in particular.

Ria had business with Guinevere.

It was Carla.

In the battle this time, Carla used her magical power practically to the limit, to the point that the magic restoration medicines she took continuously lost their effect.

Restoring her magical power to that extent, to say nothing of allies, she even healed injured enemies.

Of course, even Ria didn't have any objections towards healing enemy captives after the battle.

However, the enemy force's injuries this time had been too large, so her devoted

treatment could be seen as a kind of self-sacrifice.

Thinking about it, Ria didn't know much about the person named Carla. A dragonslayer. A wife. A holy woman that didn't put faith in gods. Although her features could be described using words, she didn't feel that could show Carla's true nature.

Carla was a person who didn't show her true self to others. If she showed anything, it was a gentleness of being concerned over people. Even that wasn't for appearances alone. And she was strong. Strength of mind. She was unwavering. Accepting of everything. Even of the things concerning Ria. Ria felt that she was a strange human.

She needed to know more about Carla. Asking the person in question definitely wouldn't yield answers. Or rather, even if she answered, it wouldn't be an answer that Ria hoped for. Therefore, Ria needed to speak with Guinevere. That queen could be called Carla's best friend. Facing a discussion that would surely be tougher than a battle, Ria casually smiled.

Her Lips

“Oh~, welcome back~”

Guinevere was swamped with official documents, but she received Ria in the office.

She had a tired expression, but her eyes were sparkling. She had been staying up every night to fiddle with her golems, Ria also heard it from the court ladies.

“You have it tough huh.”

“No way. When doing your favorite thing, fatigue is something that gets tossed out the window.”

That might certainly be so.

Ria was someone who trained her swordplay to the point of vomiting blood in her previous life. Then there were things such as maintaining law that tired her out.

“I want to talk with you for a bit...”

“Right, I also wanted to take a little break... shall we take a bath together?”

“Ah, sounds good.”

Although these two looked like this, they both had hobbies that resembled the other’s. Loving baths were one of them.

The two entered into a huge bathtub filled with hot water.

Sending away the court ladies, the two were the only ones in the room.

Although Shizuna might feel danger to her body here, Guinevere knew that she wasn’t Ria’s preference.

Guinevere entered the bath with her hair wrapped in a towel, but Ria drifted in the tub as is.

“So, what did you want to talk about?”

“Carla.”

Ria spoke about Carla at Mardass Fortress.

“I see, it does seem like something that girl would do.”

It didn’t seem to be anything new for Guinevere.

With her huge breasts floating in the hot water, she said a strong sentence.

“Do you desire her?”

Ria gulped.

Guinevere correctly guessed what Ria was thinking. Did she have on such a lustful face?

"If you are serious, not conveying your feelings honestly is useless. Imprudent tactics are useless. However, if you seriously face her—"

With her finger, the queen held up some of Ria's hair.

"That girl will respond."

"I am a woman."

It was a little late to say it, but Ria said it. Meanwhile, the queen simply laughed.

"So what?"

"You should understand too as the queen. Even at the best of times, women being together is looked at poorly, and she is a noble."

With the queen silently urging her to continue, Ria spat out a dreary thought.

"She has an obligation to leave her bloodline. Am I wrong?"

Even if she's called her wife, it would be necessary to part if another person came up. Ria always held this resolution.

"You're wrong. You're not wrong, but you're wrong."

The queen smiled mysteriously. Ria didn't like the attitude from this person that knew Carla the best.

"How am I wrong!?"

Ria unintentionally raised her voice.

She admitted it.

She envied this woman.

This was a woman that knew Carla much better than herself.

"To be that angry, you must really like her..."

She warded off Ria's intimidation with a simple shrug of her shoulders. This was really rare.

However, the smile that followed that up was gentle, yet somewhat lonesome.

Her next words caused Ria to become speechless.

"I'll tell you... that child's secret."

The queen looked at Ria as though piercing through her. It was a forceful glance. If she looked away, she would surely be scorned.

"That girl... cannot bear a child."

Ria wasn't certain of what happened after that.

By the time she'd realized, she was in her bathrobe with her hair practically not dried at all, sitting on the bed in her room.

This was the first time that she'd been shocked to this extent about a person other than herself.

"She doesn't menstruate. The doctors say it is something natural."

Something like that was said, but it already didn't matter.

Ria couldn't become a man.

Carla couldn't bear children.

It was painful.

Why was it painful? Her not being able to give birth to a child was accepted to be natural. However, what about Carla?

Even without a child, a person can live. She had her own resolution. She even had a previous life.

However, Carla's case was different.

She, after knowing that she couldn't have children, decided to live for people other than herself.

That decision was something that only Guinevere had known.

It was something that she could only tell her best friend. Ria herself hadn't known.

It was something she probably didn't want to talk about, though.

Those who held Dragon's Bloodline, could they live in perpetuity? This was something that Ria didn't know, however...

"Ria?"

There was a knock at the door.

She knew who was it was.

Therefore, she didn't answer.

"I heard that you'd called for me..."

Naturally, Carla entered the room and placed the documents in her hands on the desk. She walked up to Ria, who was still in her bathrobe.

"Your hair is still wet, isn't it."

Carla took out a handkerchief to start wiping down Ria's hair when her arm was

suddenly grasped.

Standing up, Ria restrained Carla, turned her around and pushed her down on to the bed.

“Ria?”

Even in such a situation, Carla’s eyes didn’t waver.

As though she could accept anything, such was her strength—or perhaps her negligence.

“I heard it from Guinevere... She said that you can’t have children.

Even she knew that her voice was awfully cold.

“Yes. That’s why I did not marry.”

Indeed, she was an eternal maiden.

She was the ideal goddess for a crooked man.

Beautiful, never growing old, infinitely overflowing with love, and conducts herself fairly.

The water dripping from Ria’s hair wet Carla’s face, who was still pinned down on the bed.

“You are my wife.”

This time, without reservation.

Ria placed her lips against Carla’s.

Once, twice, three times. The tip of her tongue parted her lips.

She traced out her tongue, as though savoring it. The sweetness was causing her to feel excited.

Under her body, Carla quivered with a start.

With a trailing note, Ria separated her lips from Carla’s.

A string of saliva connected the two.

“Some day...”

Ria moaned. As though in declaration.

“Some day, your body and mind will be mine. I will make it so that you cannot live without me. So that you think of no one but me.”

Saying it like a curse, Ria let go of her.

Carla remained lying in the bed for a while, but when she got up a moment later, she simply straightened her untidy hair.

And, still sitting on the bed, arranged Ria’s bathrobe that had become

disheveled.

Just barely, the tip of her finger came into contact with Ria's skin.

Of course it may have been a coincidence, but nevertheless Ria's body shook from the delicately pleasant feeling.

"I live for my country and my people."

Carla announced.

"And now, for you who lead them."

Though it isn't what she expected, it was, as far as Carla was concerned, a confession.

"Some day, I'll allow you to captivate me."

Bowing to Ria with what seemed like a parting threat, Carla left the room.

Ria didn't know.

Just how intensely did Carla's heart beat by her body being under Ria's?

Ria didn't know.

Just how much did Carla ruminate over the sweetness of Ria's lips against her own?

Ria didn't know.

Just how much Carla already loved Ria.

... Ria didn't know.

A few days passed since then.

There was a report that the fortress stationed at the southern tip of Cordova that would be their bridgehead was being attacked by a large army of Cordovan troops.

Ria, with just the ogre and Casalia armies that were at hand under her flag, set forth to rescue it.

Of course, Carla followed.

"The enemy's strength is around five military corps. Because it valued speed, their siege weapons and supply convoys are likely at a minimum."

Fio's report was brought by the beastkin from the Cordovan territory.

As they weren't part of Cordova even around ten years ago and were being treated as a race entirely inferior to humans, they instantly offered their complete cooperation with Ogress.

Ria also responded to them by admitting each tribe's head as a formal noble. As for how succession rights were handled among the tribes, Ria wasn't going to look into that.

When Cordova's army learned that troops that exceeded theirs were coming, they immediately retreated.

Although they didn't know who its commander was, it was a wise judgement. At any rate, there were double their amount of soldiers. Moreover, 30,000 ogres. They should have already understood from their current fight that they wouldn't be able to win in a head-on collision.

"It'll get a little troublesome from here on huh."

Ria muttered that, but Fio sent out a lifeboat from an unexpected direction.

"But Ria-sama, according to Cordova's military doctrine, in the case of meeting enemy troops, so long as there is no huge reason, they will definitely be punished for retreating without doing at least a single battle."

"Interesting."

Instinctively checking a document, Ria laughed. In a sneer.

"Cordova is causing systemic fatigue."

"Systemic fatigue? What's that?"

It seemed that Fio didn't understand what it meant that well, but Ria was able to sense it clearly.

When thinking about it, the Cordovan army's movements and rules were being upheld, but they lacked the suitable military forces for it.

War was literally a fight for blood, by blood. It was a mistake to assume complete order and human reasoning.

Ria felt that this war might end unexpectedly early.

In the case of war, the quickest way to end it was to catch the statesmen.

"In addition to the beastkin, increase the human reconnaissance units as well. Moreover, spread rumors as much as possible in towns where humans reside."

Cordova was simply a nation that had rapidly increased its territorial bounds, however, that didn't necessarily mean that it had also seized its new territories' public opinions.

Because of their oppression, if the previous feudal lords that left for the army returned, she felt that there was a large possibility of a rebellion occurring.

This time, Ria decided to end the fighting with Cordova quickly.

The Invasion Begins

Ria bestowed an army to the nobles that used to be the lords of their lands, aiming to split Cordova's territory.

Of course there was still the danger of each being defeated, but even so it would expand the war front and allow them to choose which territory to suppress all at once.

The old lords that had become her staff officers were enthusiastic about it. That was probably called for, for one to regain their ancestral lands, it would be strange if they weren't in high spirits about it.

The army that Ria had left in their custody weren't the ogre and Casalian elites. It was primarily comprised of the allied forces between Manesh and the other feudal lords, so even if they failed, the expected damage would be minimized.

As a result, although there were territories this was effective on, there were also territories they failed on recovering as well.

Ria, together with her staff, studied the cause.

Well, it was probably natural. The territories that had had an effective government beforehand welcomed their former lords with open arms. As for the lords that had foolishly imposed themselves even more strongly than Cordova, their fiefs' populations supported Cordova's army.

As for the nobles that recovered their territories with their own power, they were left to manage their territory as before. In the cases where the Ogress army was necessary, a curtailment of their territory would be done.

At this late hour, mankind didn't have the flexibility to treat nobles with extravagance.

"It looks like Cordova's government was even more unappealing than expected."

One of the staff officers said such a thing, but that surely was so.

Particularly the countries that had been annexed in the previous several decades, they immediately rebelled with the outside pressure on Cordova.

"All things considered, what is with the countries that continued with exploitation even worse than Cordova..."

Ria placed her hand against her forehead? Mou, are you dumb? Do you want to die? It had that kind of feeling.

Cordova had set its sights on countries like that at the start, though eventually it annexed its surrounding countries after growing its national power.

Although it seemed that their governing body was considerably intelligent, to think that they could continue with that same strategy forever was Cordova's failing.

Ria believed that something like a country that could last in perpetuity didn't exist.

Even the empire that boasted of its three thousand year history disappeared with an unknown cause.

There were five kingdoms, Casalia included, with a thousand years of history, but royal families that had great power—Casalia, Lemdria, Istria, Labra and the like—were on the brink of collapse.

Although Casalia couldn't be said to be at the point of collapsing, it was definitely was a risk of it.

Being able to overcome that was mankind's strength.

It wasn't the system's power. Although the system was certainly useful for ruling, when it expands, it wouldn't be rare for it to torment society.

"Huh?"

Towards the staff officers that made puzzled faces, Ria said she was talking to her elder brother that had died long ago... at least, that's the story that was made up.

Among the staff officers that consented one way or another, Serge was the only one to laugh.

As a matter of fact... this old joke would also add to Ria's mystique.

A young, undefeated, invincible, and beautiful general that sometimes said things that couldn't be understood. And then, the young mage in charge of logistics that was able to understand them.

As there must have been some reason for it, her staff officers that had served long years in the military reviewed strategy books and military classics. Although they were trying to spontaneously improve themselves, if Ria knew about it, she might have fainted from the despair-driven agony.

Two weeks into Ogress' invasion into Cordova's territory.

With the resistance seeming as though none existed at all, the Ogress forces invaded the territory.

As for Cordova's lack of resistance, that was simply because it took time to prepare.

If they had just poorly prepared their war potential, they would have been easily defeated by the large militaristic might of the Ogress army.

Organize a large army and defeat them in battle. That was the response the Cordovan leaders went with.

However, that took a longer amount of time than expected.

It was as simple as the document procedure going slowly, although it was also a problem with their expanding government structure, but to be even more simple, they had trouble organizing soldiers and food for them.

They may have thought them to be a rebel army and not an enemy, but when they arrived at a village that should have become a cornerstone for war supplies, they were attacked by a small group of people. However, as they recognized them to be beastkin, there was no mistaking it.

Unlike Ogress' regular forces, they were brutal.

First of all, as something required by all living things, they made sure to destroy water sources as much as possible.

Throwing corpses and excrement into the water wells, they limited Cordova's means of procuring water.

And they burned food storages without exception. Cordova had no choice but to release its military stores, so its supply lines naturally lengthened.

And to defend it, they conscripted even more troops.

Even so, the Cordovan army was somehow able to mobilize with twenty army corps. A large army of 240,000.

Meanwhile, the invading Ogress army had a large amount of military troops at around 250,000.

The place they would confront one another? A place the Ogress army had set up at ahead of time, Maza Plains.

The war that would be referred to as the Maza Plains Battle in the future was

just about to begin.

A Large Battle

Ria was troubled.

A trouble from the depths of her heart.

It wasn't about how they were going to win this war.

It was what was the best method about method they would use to win it.

She thought about this over and over.

And Ria was angry.

At who? No one. At the situation.

In order to feed 200,000 captives, she had to turn the captured horses into food.

Tens of thousands of horses.

Just like with cats, Ria loved horses. This was something she wasn't able to endure easily.

Therefore, she drew near the point that she'd have to relieve her stress.

It's said that the supreme commander keeping their heart and mind in balance was extraordinarily important.

"Let me rub your boobs!"

"Eh?"

When Shizuna walked into her tent after being summoned, Ria began to slowly massage her breasts.

"Haah~, so calming~"

"Ooh! No it's not!"

Although Shizuna protested in embarrassment, she didn't sound persuasive at all. At any rate, she wasn't resisting in the least."

"What're you saying, you're feeling good too right? Hooh, what are these? These bumps here?"

She couldn't sexually harass the pure and innocent Carla or the diligent and serious Fio, but she could to Shizuna.

She could because she knew that Shizuna actually liked it.

"A-ah! Stop!"

"Nope~"

Nibbling on her earlobe, Ria thoroughly played with Shizuna.

"I mean, aren't you already wet?"

"I-I'm not!"

Their fooling around didn't end until Carla called for her.

"Now then, time to make a speech huh?"

She was able to relieve her stress.

She stepped into a bath to wash herself off. Then, wearing polished and sparkling armor, Ria stood in front of the captive Cordovan soldiers.

As for the contents of the speech, they weren't anything too original. However, with seeing Ria standing before them, causing the Cordovan captives stared in blank surprise at the beautiful and young girl that defeated them, it had enough of an effect.

Up till then, the country named Cordova... just how much oppression had it caused? She concretely compared it to Manesh.

Then, as Cordova hadn't prepared enough food for this fight, she spoke how they were treated as throwaways.

Furthermore, Ria suspended a lure right in front of them.

She would even return the armor and weapons they had cast aside.

After this, they would become their vanguard towards Cordova's capital city.

Although cruelties towards the citizens were prohibited, they were allowed to keep any of the royal palace's spoils.

It was absurd.

The royal palace was an unattainable object for soldiers. It was just an existence they could gaze at from afar.

She even said it was fine if they raped however they wanted.

For the commanders that had less control on their urges, this was an attractive proposition.

If they rendered any distinguished services in this fight, they would be promoted to Ogress nobles.

"However, only for three days after breaking through the capital city's walls. Any person who continues beyond that point will be executed, no exceptions."

Carrot and stick. It was very likely that nothing like this had ever been offered on the continent.

The morale of the Ogress soldiers that had, until the other day, been under Cordova's command couldn't raise any higher.

Ria's great army of 400,000 advanced towards Cordova's capital.

Attacking the Capital

There was a man named Manyu.

As a highly ranked Cordovan bureaucrat, he was a man whose name was included in the lowest position of the royal court's council.

Among the disorder caused by the threat of impending Ogress army in the council, he gave the Cordovan king a single proposal.

"How about we set the slaves free, turning them into soldiers?"

His words gave a change to the council's mood, which had thus far been leaning towards capitulation.

Although Ria had recommended that Cordova surrender several times, they had refused each and every time.

The reason was simple: they had plenty of forces remaining in Cordova.

However, the army of twenty corps they had sent as their elite suffered a defeat before the Ogress army. Now, that army was moving to invade the capital.

Ria's statement of already assuming the royal palace as her prize had already been conferred to them.

Even now, if they capitulated and entered Ogress jurisdiction, they were only guaranteed positions as Cordovan earls.

However, Manyu proposed to wait.

Would Ogress' queen spare the life of the king of the country that had resisted this much?

Moreover, would she do the same for the king's aids and the other nobles?

Cordova capital had strong walls, they even had food. As long as they had sufficient forces to rely on, they still had the ability to resist.

And after resisting for a long enough time and showing off their power, they might not be unable to draw up more acceptable conditions for their surrender.

Manyu's sentence caused a stirring wave to flow through the king and nobles' intentions.

"Then Manyu, the only person that can take command of the slaves, shall we remain in our country?"

The king finally spoke.

"If permitted, this retainer will use his life..."

The Cordovan king nodded powerfully.

"So tired~, so tired~"

Lying directly on top of the carpet and tumbling about, Ria embarrassed those around her.

"Have some tea."

The tea that Carla prepared was her usual milk tea.

Ria finally drank some, stopping her baby-like whining.

"Ah~, it's going to be hard from here on~"

She collapsed forward onto the table in exhaustion.

"That's so. It's something that has to be done, so you'll do it somehow, thanks in advance."

Fio's face was also thickly fatigued. Truthfully, the person able to move around the best was Carla.

Every day, she healed those who were injured and became sick due to the war. It wasn't a situation where she needed to keep extra magical power in reserve anymore, so by her hand, even those who normally wouldn't recover were able to turn back into able-bodied people.

With her like that, many no longer called her the dragonslayer, but the holy woman.

"This one does not want to work! This one absolutely doesn't want to work!"

Even though she said that with her mouth, Ria worked one way or another.

To quickly return to Manesh and temporarily go back to Casalia, making Fio her official wife...

Seeing that sumptuous feast in her dreams, Ria did her best today as well.

Dealing With the Postwar Period

It was common sense that things would get harder before they got better, more so in war.

Ria worked hard at her state affairs every day for ruling the vast ex-Cordova territory that had become hers.

“There is no money.”

The man to say that incredibly frankly was a Cornada earl.

He, who was originally a financial bureaucrat, completely understood the nation’s finance.

“... What?”

“It’s because your majesty graciously handed it out to the soldiers.”

“Aah, right...”

Of course she remembered allowing them to plunder the treasury.

That was necessary for her to seize the Cordovan soldiers. Moreover, Ria felt something like money could be produced so long as they had people.

“Certainly, but right now, there is no money with which to pay our soldiers.”

“... Serge—! Seeerge—! Come up with some ideas~!”

At times like this, Ria would immediately rely on people.

Summoned, even Serge couldn’t come up with a solution that easily.

“Wouldn’t war bonds or government bonds work?”

War bonds wouldn’t work that well since the war had ended, but government bonds would be good. They would temporarily settle it with government bonds.

Because Ria didn’t have the mind to leave the ex-Cordovan bureaucracy to swell and explode.

Similar to some countries, it didn’t use any money on the unproductive elderly. On that mark, this country where fundamental human rights didn’t exist was wonderful.

Ria came to feel a newfound appreciation towards her previous life’s great people.

Northeast of Cordova. A remote village far in the mountains. The group, now finished sabotaging Cordova's forces, set out to return home.

"Well then, that's it for us."

"Yeah, good work. Thankfully we didn't lose anyone."

Giving a stern smile, the beastkin teleported. The only two remaining were Ordo and Pineau.

"Don't you want to go back as well? You should show up for your family."

Ordo spoke. The man turned towards him due to the unexpected statement. Although Pineau's immediate superior was prejudiced, he didn't particularly dislike that sort of Ordo.

"Rather, Ordo-sama, are you alright going without meeting that Jou-sama?"

It was that thing. In other words, the thing about him amassing a harem. That he would receive hate from the man-hating Asuka would loathe him if he met with her.

Even though it looked like she was building a girl's harem herself. After all, she hated all men other than his majesty the demon king.

"Well, I have other business to take care of."

What was the business Ordo spoke of? Something that he would keep to himself to the bitter end.

It could be said he fell in love with Carla the dragonslayer.

"I got it. You're not interested in dead girls after all."

He preferred taking women by force. Because of that, although he hadn't made his majesty the demon king angry a second or third time, he would probably be turned into an example the next time.

It wasn't like he didn't understand it as a man. Brandishing power eccentrically without mixing in any shallow reasoning felt manly.

However, his opponent this time was that person.

Recalling that feminine figure and that beautiful silvery hair, Pineau sighed softly.

Homecoming

There was a full moon out that night.
An atrocity was being committed under its profound brilliance.
With each swing of the sharpened blade, skin was torn and organs spilled out together with a tepid fragrance.
The leading actor in this tragedy was a single man.
A man clad in hide, wielding a sword. However, what he used to slice his victims apart... were his lengthy nails.
Ordo's weapon was his body itself. His nails and fangs could even rip through mithril.
He sensed the presence of a strong person.
With the sign of an overwhelmingly strong person heading his way, Ordo immediately vanished.

The first to arrive on the scene of that appalling slaughter was Carla, leading an order of knights.
“Cruel...”
“This one’s still breathing!”
“Carla-sama.”
Those who could use recovery magic started healing the critically wounded.
“M... mother...”
In front of an injured boy laid a woman whose eyes had lost their light.
Circulating her magical power, Carla connected to the world’s laws, calling back the lost soul.
It didn’t succeed every time. However, sometimes, Carla’s magic was able to call souls back.
“Oooh...”
“It’s a miracle...”
The people worshiped Carla much like a goddess.

“Hah, amazing. You really are a saint.”
A fairly out-of-place voice shook the area.
Carla readied herself for battle. She hadn’t noticed the man’s existence until he

had already closed in.

“Who are you?”

Perhaps, this was the person to cause this disaster.

Even so, Carla spoke with an icy voice.

“Ah, that name’s Ordo. Demon General Ordo. I’m not a general right now, though.”

With a vulgar face and an intense smile, Ordo introduced himself.

“Why, to do something like this...”

Seeing people still groaning here and there, anger sprang up within Carla.

This was no fight. It was a slaughter.

“Well, there’s a few reasons, but mainly you.”

“Me?”

“Yeah.”

Ordo wore a cruel, calculated smile.

“You can’t use much magic now, can you?”

Carla’s complexion changed. She had used too much of her magical power on revival magic.

Let along powerful offensive magic, she could hardly even use body strengthening magic.

“Carla-sama, we’re here too!”

The knights ran forward. However, with a single swing of Ordo’s sword, they were brought to their knees.

Strong.

He had a large inherent magical power as well, but he was strong at melee combat.

The only one who could win against him right then was her. That’s what Carla concluded.

“Everyone, stand back. He is my opponent.”

Then, she pulled out her Dragon Destroying Sword, Ekudra.

No matter how much an opponent would strengthen themselves, it would likely pierce their defenses.

And so, the battle began.

Comparing sword skill alone, Carla’s was higher.

However, that didn't mean much.

"It was worth waiting for a full moon."

Saying that, Ordo's muscles swelled right before her eyes, his upper body taking the form of a wolf's.

A werewolf.

Among the demon tribe, it is said that they can show their maximum strength on nights with a full moon.

With strength easily surpassing a human's limit, Carla's fight became a defensive one.

However, time appeared to slow in her vision all of a sudden.

(Serge, thank you.)

The acceleration magic came from Serge. He had also used magical power to heal her.

Using her remaining magical power, she fought Ordo.

Her blade somehow made contact with Ordo's body.

However, it was a shallow cut. It wasn't that Carla was weak, it was due to the magical power shielding her opponents body, obstructing her blade.

Considering their endurance, the one to lose would, before long, be her.

Carla felt the need to take a risk.

She injected all of her magical power into her sword and temporarily deprived her opponent of his view with magical fog.

Using that chance, she struck with all her might.

Carla's sword penetrated Ordo's abdomen.

"Unfortunate."

The next moment.

Carla's right hand was cut off by Ordo's claws.

"Aaaah—!"

Even the firm Carla couldn't endure the intense pain.

"Hahaha, man, that was close. You would've hit my heart if you hit a bit higher."

Even while saying that, Ordo slowly pulled the sword out of his abdomen.

Despite being tormented by pain, Carla used a small recovery magic. If she didn't stop her right arm's bleeding, she would bleed out.

As if waiting for that moment, Ordo took Carla's remaining left arm and held her

in the air.

“Uu... aaah—!”

He crushed her left arm at the wrist.

“You don’t have enough magical power right? I planned this fight after all.”

As though excited, Ordo spoke. It was true, she did not have enough magical power. If things kept on how they were, she wouldn’t be able to fight. She had to at least take a distance from him.

Did he realize her intent?

Ordo’s claws pierced through and stuck in Carla’s thighs.

“Uu....”

Carla didn’t shout this time.

Despite sweating in pain, she glared at Ordo.

“Good, good, goood!”

“Carla-sama!”

“Let go of Carla-sama!”

The knights surrounding them rushed at Ordo. However, Carla wasn’t even able to stop them.

If she so much as opened her mouth, she would likely scream from the violent pain.

Despite Ordo still holding Carla in the air by a single hand, the knights were all blown away like flies.

It was a stomp.

Right before her eyes, everything fell apart.

Her important allies were dying.

“Are you vexed? At being so... powerless?”

Saying that, Ordo brought a claw up to Carla’s collar, tearing it down.

Carla’s skin, more fair than white snow, was exposed to the moonlight.

“Carla-san!”

He couldn’t stand by.

He’d long since hit his limit.

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Even so, not taking Serge lightly, Ordo cast Carla aside and exploded towards Serge at an alarming speed.

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If he weren’t reinforced, he would likely have died.

Still, many bones in his body had broken.

(Dammit... I’m so weak...)

Ashamed at his weakness, Serge lost consciousness.

(Nee-chan...)

“Now then, how about we continue? At any rate, I was told not to kill you.”

Still stretched out across the ground, Carla heard that statement.

Ordo took his claw and... pierced it through Carla’s chest.

“Understand? This is your heart. I can feel it shaking in fear.”

Ordo explained happily. Carla could do nothing but desperately endure the pain.

“Right, just keep on enduring that pain. That’s when you’re most beautiful.”

Ordo muttered in delight.

He then stabbed a claw into Carla’s navel.

“—... hah...”

“Your organs are warm... feels great. I can feel them move.”

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Even while sexually disgracing Carla’s insides, Ordo spoke as though innocent.

Like an innocent beast playing with its food, he tried breaking Carla’s spirit.

“I’ll put it in here. Don’t worry, I won’t kill you... Rather, it’ll probably feel great.”

Even so.

Even so, Carla didn’t despair.

She held on to something, even if her own spirit died, she would still hold on to

it.

Serge was likely still alive. If he met Ria, this man would definitely be stopped.

—Ria.

—Just one more time.

—I want to see you...

In the next moment, Ordo was blasted away from an impact to his side. She knew the cause of it due to the person standing before her.

Carla's eyes caught sight of a girl.

A girl with black wings sprouting from her back.

She stood there, her back catching the silver moonlight.

“Ria...”

The black-haired girl said nothing. She simply healed the unmoving Carla.

“You... fucking... bastard...”

Ordo, having crashed into a wall, stood up from the debris. He hadn't received any damage from the attack.

And as for Ria—

She shook.

So long as she had her katana, she would feel calm.

But right now, that was impossible.

She was too angry.

She couldn't endure her quakes.

“You. Are. Dead.”

There was no emotion to it.

It was a unilateral declaration.

Trap

“Alright, then let’s begin the 3,998th meeting of the People’s Army Supreme Council~!”

With the awfully careless scarlet-haired girl’s announcement complete, a giant clapped his hands.

“Eh~, then first, there was a magic that erased the imperial capital, but I only know that I don’t understand it at all!”

“Oi oi, what’re you sayin’?”

The giant unintentionally retorted, but the girl simply waved her hand.

“It wasn’t space-time magic or genesis, neither was it a fusion of fire and wind magic of course. In short, it’s a magic that doesn’t exist in this world!”

Her words held no concrete evidence to explain with, but they held a certain persuasiveness.

“What’re you sayin’?”

“Therefore, I don’t understand it! To begin with, magic didn’t exist in Thor’s world right?”

The giant warrior, Thor, scratched his head.

“I was more into sports, wasn’t too good with physics or chemistry...”

They didn’t understand the meaning of his words, but everyone understood what he was trying to say.

To put it simply, Thor was slow in the head.

“How about we change topics? It’s about the hero though.”

A young man with a huge staff spoke. There was a certain bitterness in his vague smile.

“By the grace of water dragon Rana’s power, he was deported to another world. Additionally, he was together with a high elf child.”

“A high elf!? Isn’t that Corfus’ successor!?”

“Isn’t that bad!?”

Matching the young girl, Ferna spoke up as well.

The young man holding the cane, Yamato, made a slight nod.

This Millennium, they would have to fight against the Demon King without a

hero's power.

From there, they spoke about various things; things like the nations of Lemdria, Istria, and Labra. They also talked about various regions.

All of them were in the direction of stabilization. Towards being able to concentrate mankind's power for the Millennium.

The primary nations that would fight against the Demon King's forces appeared to be Istria, Lemdria, Casalia, and now Ogress.

Ferna gave her report regarding Ogress' queen.

"To put it short, that girl is a frightening person."

What did she mean? Everyone's gazes seemed to be asking that.

"First of all, her Dragon Eyes. Most humans wouldn't be able to oppose her."

That was probably true. Even among abilities that held power in their gaze—referred to as magical eyes—they were in a considerably powerful group. If activated imprudently, it could end with the other party's death with a simple glare.

And then there was her personal combat capabilities, those were also frightening. Even Ferna didn't believe that she could win against her.

"I can't be certain because of affinities, but the only person among us that might win against her would be Yamato-san."

The leader of the secret society, Black Cat: Yamato.

As a matter of course, the executives knew his hidden ability.

Although she obviously knew the other executives' hidden abilities, she still said that Ria was probably stronger than them.

"Being able to survive Thermonuclear Darkness Exploding Hell, as well as Destruction of Heaven and Earth, she's a lively one isn't she? Rather, she isn't even a person at this point."

"Even using Meteor Shower looks useless?"

Azelford asked. If that was also useless, she really wouldn't be killable through magic.

"That is a tactical grade magic, so it would be best to avoid that as long as possible."

The mages went silent. As for magic beyond that, there was the supreme magic of the space-time category, but no one there could use it.

"So then there's no choice but for me to fight up close huh..."

Thor groaned. It was a certain victory for him as far as pure melee combat was concerned, most enemies would be silenced.

But even that assumed that his opponents could use magic.

"Her magical power exceeds Carla's. If she used magic from afar, even Thor wouldn't win."

"The heck's with that. Why's there such a monster being a human!"

Thor spoke as though grieving, it was something that couldn't be helped.

Everyone's eyes fell on Yamato, yet he simply gave a simple sentence."

"I have not decided on turning her into an enemy."

It was a small possibility.

After that, everyone present talked about Ria's capability in policy making and her military talent before adjourning.

It was only later that Ferna realized that she had forgot to speak of the thing concerning Halt, but that was a story for later.

"And well, that's what's been happening."

As for who Serge was blabbing into the sky to, it was Ria. It was a space-time magic called Far Speech.

It came with the disadvantage that the only person that could get in touch with Ria was Serge, but it still allowed him to report to her on a day's events. It was simply an excellent magic.

"Thinking about it normally, it might just be chaotic human nature, but..."

It was difficult to imagine that that was the case at this point. Most of those who were being killed were ex-Cordovan nobles and their children.

"Well, please contact me immediately if you think of something. I'll come back as soon as I get a chance, too. Don't let Carla do too much!"

"Even if you say that... it's Carla-san we're talking about."

"Carla-san... is it. You've gotten pretty close, have you?"

Her voice suddenly turning cold, Serge thought up an explanation in a panic.

"That's, uh, she said since I call Nee-chan 'Nee-chan', I should call Carla-san that too!"

"Hmm..."

When Ria gave her tentative consent to it, a voice called out for Serge. He was in Cornada's imperial court, inside a room that was given to him.

"Serge-sama! Another horrible murder occurred! Carla-sama has already left for it!"

Serge raised his hand to respond to the court lady, answering Ria.

"Since that's how it is, I'll do something one way or another. Cya."

Who in the world would do something like that? It was possible in the case of the demon tribe, but that wasn't how Rei or Asuka did things.

"Fio, I need to leave for a little."

Saying that, Ria strode out of her office.

Disgrace

There was a full moon out that night.
An atrocity was being committed under its profound brilliance.
With each swing of the sharpened blade, skin was torn and organs spilled out together with a tepid fragrance.
The leading actor in this tragedy was a single man.
A man clad in hide, wielding a sword. However, what he used to slice his victims apart... were his lengthy nails.
Ordo's weapon was his body itself. His nails and fangs could even rip through mithril.
He sensed the presence of a strong person.
With the sign of an overwhelmingly strong person heading his way, Ordo immediately vanished.

The first to arrive on the scene of that appalling slaughter was Carla, leading an order of knights.
“Cruel...”
“This one’s still breathing!”
“Carla-sama.”
Those who could use recovery magic started healing the critically wounded.
“M... mother...”
In front of an injured boy laid a woman whose eyes had lost their light.
Circulating her magical power, Carla connected to the world’s laws, calling back the lost soul.
It didn’t succeed every time. However, sometimes, Carla’s magic was able to call souls back.
“Oooh...”
“It’s a miracle...”
The people worshiped Carla much like a goddess.

“Hah, amazing. You really are a saint.”
A fairly out-of-place voice shook the area.
Carla readied herself for battle. She hadn’t noticed the man’s existence until he

had already closed in.

“Who are you?”

Perhaps, this was the person to cause this disaster.

Even so, Carla spoke with an icy voice.

“Ah, that name’s Ordo. Demon General Ordo. I’m not a general right now, though.”

With a vulgar face and an intense smile, Ordo introduced himself.

“Why, to do something like this...”

Seeing people still groaning here and there, anger sprang up within Carla.

This was no fight. It was a slaughter.

“Well, there’s a few reasons, but mainly you.”

“Me?”

“Yeah.”

Ordo wore a cruel, calculated smile.

“You can’t use much magic now, can you?”

Carla’s complexion changed. She had used too much of her magical power on revival magic.

Let along powerful offensive magic, she could hardly even use body strengthening magic.

“Carla-sama, we’re here too!”

The knights ran forward. However, with a single swing of Ordo’s sword, they were brought to their knees.

Strong.

He had a large inherent magical power as well, but he was strong at melee combat.

The only one who could win against him right then was her. That’s what Carla concluded.

“Everyone, stand back. He is my opponent.”

Then, she pulled out her Dragon Destroying Sword, Ekudra.

No matter how much an opponent would strengthen themselves, it would likely pierce their defenses.

And so, the battle began.

Comparing sword skill alone, Carla’s was higher.

However, that didn't mean much.

"It was worth waiting for a full moon."

Saying that, Ordo's muscles swelled right before her eyes, his upper body taking the form of a wolf's.

A werewolf.

Among the demon tribe, it is said that they can show their maximum strength on nights with a full moon.

With strength easily surpassing a human's limit, Carla's fight became a defensive one.

However, time appeared to slow in her vision all of a sudden.

(Serge, thank you.)

The acceleration magic came from Serge. He had also used magical power to heal her.

Using her remaining magical power, she fought Ordo.

Her blade somehow made contact with Ordo's body.

However, it was a shallow cut. It wasn't that Carla was weak, it was due to the magical power shielding her opponents body, obstructing her blade.

Considering their endurance, the one to lose would, before long, be her.

Carla felt the need to take a risk.

She injected all of her magical power into her sword and temporarily deprived her opponent of his view with magical fog.

Using that chance, she struck with all her might.

Carla's sword penetrated Ordo's abdomen.

"Unfortunate."

The next moment.

Carla's right hand was cut off by Ordo's claws.

"Aaaah—!"

Even the firm Carla couldn't endure the intense pain.

"Hahaha, man, that was close. You would've hit my heart if you hit a bit higher."

Even while saying that, Ordo slowly pulled the sword out of his abdomen.

Despite being tormented by pain, Carla used a small recovery magic. If she didn't stop her right arm's bleeding, she would bleed out.

As if waiting for that moment, Ordo took Carla's remaining left arm and held her

in the air.

“Uu... aaah—!”

He crushed her left arm at the wrist.

“You don’t have enough magical power right? I planned this fight after all.”

As though excited, Ordo spoke. It was true, she did not have enough magical power. If things kept on how they were, she wouldn’t be able to fight. She had to at least take a distance from him.

Did he realize her intent?

Ordo’s claws pierced through and stuck in Carla’s thighs.

“Uu....”

Carla didn’t shout this time.

Despite sweating in pain, she glared at Ordo.

“Good, good, goood!”

“Carla-sama!”

“Let go of Carla-sama!”

The knights surrounding them rushed at Ordo. However, Carla wasn’t even able to stop them.

If she so much as opened her mouth, she would likely scream from the violent pain.

Despite Ordo still holding Carla in the air by a single hand, the knights were all blown away like flies.

It was a stomp.

Right before her eyes, everything fell apart.

Her important allies were dying.

“Are you vexed? At being so... powerless?”

Saying that, Ordo brought a claw up to Carla’s collar, tearing it down.

Carla’s skin, more fair than white snow, was exposed to the moonlight.

“Carla-san!”

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She couldn't endure her quakes.

“You. Are. Dead.”

There was no emotion to it.

It was a unilateral declaration.

Rage

Ria was angry.

What she felt in this fight wasn't an emotion akin to murderous intent towards her opponent.

It was more pure, a burning anger that desired nothing but to erase their existence from this world.

"I'll gradually cut you into pieces, starting at your toes. You will beg for your death."

Ria's voice was rather calm as she said that.

She only healed the most severe of Carla's wounds.

"Ria..."

She came. Ria's current anger was almost enough to erase that joy, however.

"This will be over soon."

Saying that, Ria stood up.

She unsheathed Nagasone Kotetsu.

Ordo felt a sense of dread from her movements.

Fear caused by an overwhelming existence. A dragon, for instance. At that time, he was saved by the Demon King.

Ria just then noticed something abnormal.

"Great Collapse... what...?"

Halt landed in a forest far away from Cornada.

He probably wouldn't be seen here.

He cremated Ordo's remains. What could he say to his wife and children? Halt had a headache. He didn't want to get used to doing this, but that had wound up happening.

Even so, he noticed a pursuer.

"You were the Demon King?"

He had been noticed. Having to leave the inn in such a rush was what probably

gave him away.

“Ferna-san...”

“Did you deceive me?”

Pulling out her sword, she turned it towards Halt.

He tried to think up various excuses. However, they were all just that: excuses.

“I am sorry.”

“I—you...!”

She had to fight him.

At least, that is what should have happened.

“I don’t want to fight...”

Ferna muttered, weakly.

Halt removed his mask. His usual calm face was still there, the same as ever. However, different from the usual, it also contained a somewhat troubled look. “If you don’t want to fight me, you don’t need to. Because I want to make a world without fighting.”

“You are this world’s enemy!”

“You’re wrong. Not mankind’s enemy, not the world’s enemy... no.”

Halt shook his head.

“True, I might be the world’s enemy. However, I am not going to allow the world to just meekly walk into the Millennium.”

Ferna understood the look that Halt had in his eyes at that moment quite well.

They were tired of life, the eyes of an immortal.

But strength filled those eyes again after a moment.

“You approve of the Millennium? People and demons killing each other in order to cycle souls... You approve of this system, not thinking of anything new?”

His eyes were filled with so much conviction that Ferna was unintentionally overawed by them.

“I do not approve of it. I will fight it.”

Ah, so this was anger.

Anger towards the world’s unjustness.

Ferna had already forgotten it—nay, she had tried to.

“You are a dangerous person.”

While believing that, a thought sprung forth from the depths of her body.

If it’s this person.

Tolerating even such a horrific murderer, if it's this person, would he tolerate the Millennium's mass slaughter as well?

"But, if it's you, you might be able to become our comrade!"

"The Black Cats? I split from them. Neither Azel nor Shana followed me."

The brown-skinned young man and the scarlet-haired girl. Halt recalled his comrades, they had confronted that Demon King's cruelty together with him.

It wasn't a wonder, it might even be natural. This way, the world will overcome the Millennium. To avoid the Great Collapse.

"Then I'll go with you!"

Ferna spoke clearly.

Those were her true feelings. Halt was surprised by her sincere eyes watching him.

"You?"

This girl should have been raised by the Black Cats. This girl also knew what the Millennium meant.

"Yes!"

Ferna nodded strongly.

"Please, let me go with you."

Vitality, Repeatedly

After she had made the court ladies that were gathering all leave, Ria entered Carla's room by herself.

It was a simple room. There were documents on top of a desk, but nothing else. There was nothing else to give a feeling that it was being lived in. Carla laid within the canopied bed.

Her complexion was still white. A white that caused a sublimation of her unworldly beauty.

"Ria?"

"Did I wake you?"

"No."

Carla tried to get out of the bed, but Ria prevented her.

"Does it still hurt?"

"No, though my endurance hasn't recovered."

Though she said that, her magical power probably hadn't recovered either.

Ria took Carla's right hand. The cut surfaces had reattached neatly.

"Can you move it yet?"

"It is still a little numb, but..."

Ria moved her hand, tracing the area, and touched her tongue against the area. Diligently, Ria traced her way down Carla's arm with her lips. Once she reached her fingers, Ria nipped the base of Carla's pinky with her lips.

Carla let out a breath. Extending her arm, Ria went to take off Carla's clothes.

"Ria..."

"Please, show me your other scars."

Saying that, Ria widened the lapel of Carla's clothes.

Her scars had faded cleanly, but there were still tinges of red.

Ria touched Carla's body with her fingers and lips.

"I'll never... let other guys touch you again."

Carla's hand moved, embracing Ria close with her body.

If she saw her, Carla's eyes were wet as well.

"Please... don't leave me again."

“Then never let go of my hands.”

As though demanding it of each other, their lips met.

When they parted, their tongues were intertwined.

Arms twined with arms, legs twined with legs, and like a single organism, they moved against each other seductively.

They sucked each other's tongues many times. Their hands and legs transferring their passion.

Before long, an unbelievable heat was born from Ria's lower abdomen.

“Ria, that's... a man's...”

Surprise appeared on Carla's feverishly delirious and beautiful face.

“Valis said it. When demanding strongly to be with each other, it'll naturally...”

It was true, Carla demanded Ria quite strongly.

Of course it was the same with Ria, she also demanded Carla quite strongly.

“Yes, Ria... please, come...”

Carla, lying on her back, moved so as to usher Ria in.

And so Ria offered herself into Carla.

The morning light was strong. They had probably overslept a considerable amount.

“Ria, please wake up.”

How many years had it been since someone woke her up?

When the stark-naked Ria opened her eyes, Carla, who should have been in her arms, had already put on clothes and stood beside the bed as though nothing had changed.

The night before was dreamlike, but judging by the disaster that was their bed, it was no dream.

Ria's body had returned to normal. Just like that, it would only appear when necessary.

“I'm going to work. The bed... could you do something about it?”

Carla spoke in a soft voice. She surely didn't want to leave it to the maids.

“Understood... is your body alright?”

“I can still feel you inside me...”

Carla whispered, her cheeks dyed red.

Such a thing said, Ria couldn't help but blush as well.

"Today, I will stick to light work... Ah..."

"What's wrong?"

Nervously, Carla rubbed her thighs together.

"Your... from inside..."

"S-sorry."

Despite the two blushing, Carla forcibly switched her appearance to look firm.

"Then, see you later."

Seeing Carla out of the room after she said that, Ria laid herself back against the bed.

"So cute..."

Carla changed her posture at Ria's whims within her arms. Ria would also place her lips and fingers where Carla desired.

It could be said that they had become one.

"Ah, gotta clean, gotta clean."

Even though she said that, Ria wound up rolling around in the sheets where Carla's purity was relieved.

Whenever they did this again, she wanted to show Carla the sheets and see her reaction.

"Even so... I'm tired..."

She knew it was Carla's first time, but she didn't stop. It felt like something primordial forced its way out of her and couldn't bring herself to get up now.

She couldn't recall just how many times they did it. She'd wound up reaching the limits of her endurance, but now she was just worried about how Carla was doing since her injuries had just barely healed.

"Carla..."

Her fingertips and lips had touched practically all of Carla's body.

Ria hugged herself, not moving from the bed for just a little while longer.

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